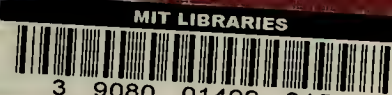


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Thresholds 13

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MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Department of Architecture

Thresholds 13 (1996)

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Thresholds is published and distributed twice yearly by the Department of Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. No part of *Thresholds* may be photocopied and distributed without written authorization from the editors.

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ISSN: 1091-711X

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introduction

—Bukhara—Bangkok—Beijing—Barcelona—
Belfast—Venice—Como—Cuzco—Karimabad—
Essaouira—Gujarat—San Juan—

There are certain city names which repeat in our ears and represent in our minds not quite the 'normal' image, if any, of a given place. It seems to be a preoccupation of the School of Architecture and Planning at MIT to travel, bringing specific notions of place-making to an unfamiliar site, yet with open eyes, attentive ears, and uncluttered minds, as the act of travel affords a fresh start. Even in these days of virtual voyages and pixel postcards, one can hardly imagine the education of an architect without some act of journeying taking place.

This issue of *Thresholds* is nominally about travel, more precisely about the "travelling self" as Trinh T. Minh-ha defines it: "Both the self that moves physically from one place to another, following a mapped movement [and] an undetermined journeying practice, having constantly to negotiate between a here, a there, and an elsewhere."¹ It is a topic which seems particularly at home at MIT, a place where self-education is built on an awareness of difference, for we as students and faculty are composed of a diverse group of "travelling selves." Travelling is here discussed as the physicality of distance: what is gained from the experience of separation, displacement, submergence, relocation. In this selection of works, we have attempted to mediate distance into intimacy, believing that architecture, like other arts, can make what is far become near. Yet one must critique this stance, as the following essays demonstrate, realizing what may appear near can create a new frontiers for others. In all, it is the act of crossing that concerns us the most. Through crossing, there remains the embedded attempt to break down borders and smudge margins, like sharp pencil lines which require a loss of incised depth if they are to take on a new geometry.

Through these eleven explorations, we want to introduce another place—the place created between the desired destination and the point of origin; that is, the mental space constructed from personal history and the physicality that surrounds one. This act of displacement is a challenge to identity, so that identity of the travelling self must be reconstituted each time it sets out to a new environment.

"The essential privilege of the exile is to have, not just one set of eyes but half a dozen, each of them corresponding to the places you have been...There is always a kind of doubleness to that experience, and the more places you have been the more displacements you've gone through, as every exile does. As every situation is a new one, you start out each day anew."²

How do the preoccupations and subconscious meanings of travel (displacement, exile) manifest themselves in architecture? The question is addressed most directly by Hasan Uddin-Khan, in an examination of the Islamic house and mosque in non-Muslim states. Trinh Minh-ha and Jean Paul Bourdier reveal these 'half-dozen eyes' through a series of collaged film stills, pleading for survival through refusal: a refusal to lose one's vision when continual displacement threatens self-identity. In Minh-ha's work, which had inspired this issue from its inception, there is a sense of a constant negotiation of border-crossing, borders created in daily difference as well as official sanction. It is the official border which is criticized through the medium of architecture in Erik Mar's student thesis, which problematizes the site of crossing of the First and Third Worlds at the US/Mexican border. The scale is more personal in the architectural work of Sung Ho Kim, which addresses the issue of memory as it relates to both history

(the Korean War) and memoir (his grandfather's journals). Reconstitution of experience manifests itself in machinic devices and sinewy architectural forms; these in turn provoke a re-viewing of the artifacts of memory.

Dennis Adams constructs a voice box for the usually voiceless—recent immigrants to the Hague—and in the process uncovers a telling, unsettling silence, as silent as the blank white walls of its architectural setting: a replica of the cool modernism of Richard Meier's City Hall building across the street. The structure of the piece is a backhand commentary on the status symbol which Meier's architecture has come to represent, much like fashion labels or international rock stars.

Andrew Herscher also creates through a re-working of what is already there. His postcards, not of picturesque Old Prague but of the relatively bleak periphery, reveal the potential 'obscenity' of tourism beyond the camera's normal focus. Martina Pachmanová speculates that perhaps it takes a foreign artist, like Herscher in Prague or Adams in the Hague, to draw out the border in an obvious way, with the hope—not cynicism—that it would somehow, someday, disappear.

In tactics more familiar to architects, the voyage is explored as inspiration to the creative act. Adnan Morshed takes us along with Le Corbusier, who consciously manipulated his early aerial experiences to invent new ways of approaching of urban space. With Shun Kanda, we are afforded a glimpse into the private notebooks of the teacher-practitioner, who still finds the pleasure of ink on paper, and the gaze of an analytical eye, to be a simple, beneficial mode of continuing the lifelong educating process that architecture requires. William MacKay draws out Herman Melville's attempt at rehabilitation through the voyage, one which instead left Melville

every bit unsettled as a reading of his disjointed journal entries suggests. The form of the writing, like the form of a sketchbook drawing, reveals the underlying strangeness which every journey implies. Using both words and sketches, Martin Wilhelm constructs an entire universe based on the metaphor of transport, inviting bored nomadic idea-generators to the land of Refined Capsules in the hope that they will come up with better ideas of how to live.

Indeed, the word metaphor connotes travel—transport—in the original Greek meaning of the word. We invite you, then, to engage these explorations as metaphor—devices which transport us from the familiar to the unknown—a place of which we should not be afraid. They are mirror glimpses into our own continuous passages, which, like John Hollander's circle (for we cannot escape geometry, neither linear nor peripheral), carry along a personal point of origin which protects and projects the self in stranger surroundings.

*There is but one true point of origin
Each circle knows, and hides from all desire.
There is no kingdom of periphery,
Only the terrible matter of return.
Wherever, whenever, whatever, the darkness we
started
Out of, as if at a shout, was only the shadow
Of something looming, something already there.³*

—Lia Kildas & Robert Clocker

1 Trinh T Minh-ha, "Other than myself/my other self" in *Travellers' Tales*, Iain Chambers, ed. (London, 1994)

2 Edward Said, "The voice of the Palestinian in exile," in *Third Text* 3/4 (1988)

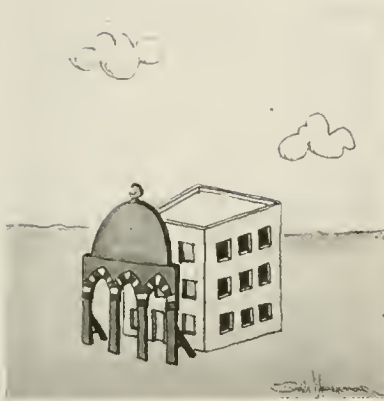
3 John Hollander, from "Point of Origin" *Harp Loke*, (New York, 1989)



“Where do we come from?
Who are we?
Where are we going?”¹

Crossing Boundaries: Expressions of Identity in Architecture

Hasan-Uddin Khan



cartoon by Saleh Memecan

From the onset of mercantile development after 1815, the cities to which immigrants came were less and less places of settled native populations. Urban migration and its attendant economics was one of the forces which created nationalism, an image of some place fixed for those who were experiencing displacement—internal migrants “restless unto death” as Tocqueville described them. This movement of people set against an enduring land, of economic re-deployment and the migration of labor which began in the mid-nineteenth century seems even more unlikely to abate in a globalizing world. The motives for cultural idealization will be as strong for us, and perhaps stronger, than they were for those who lived through the first great age of industrial capitalism. The era of the “universal citizen” celebrated by Kant was an era which could not conceive of mass migration and cultural instability to the extent of which we can see today.

My view of the notion of boundaries focuses on the idea of self-definition or identity (individual) and identity (collective) and their respective expressions in architecture. I focus here on expression through two building types: that most personal of spaces, the house, within the contexts of Asia and Africa; and that of the strong public aspect of the religious and social life of Muslims, the mosque, in traditionally non-Islamic societies. Identity is tested when contexts change, as when one becomes a foreigner; what such a foreigner then builds is an externalizing of identity.

In the spirit of crossing boundaries, my starting point is not architectural but literary: Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Amateur Emigrant*, one of the finest accounts ever written of the great European adventure in the nineteenth century—the passage to the New World. “It is, though, far more than a document. It has the resonance and simplicity of a myth. Its secret subject is the nature of personal identity—the same theme that Stevenson pursued, in a schematic and sensational way, in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.”² In *Emigrant*—

part reality, part fiction—Stevenson reflects something of his own rite of passage to America when he was a young man of twenty-eight. The Atlantic crossing, especially in novels, was often given a heightened meaning, where the old self undergoes a symbolic death and a new self is born at the end of the rite. In Stevenson's case the old self of the emigrant starts to dissolve when he loses his class from that of a European gentleman to a stateless passenger. Next he loses his occupation. To the amusement of his fellow passengers he spends most of his days writing, and identified as a writer by them is given the passenger list and told to reproduce it in his copy-book. Finally, on the train, he loses his name, refusing to tell it to a curious stranger, and takes the nickname "Shakespeare". These are part of the difficult experience of every emigrant. As Stevenson says "I was traveling... out of myself." Nameless, jobless, shorn of his personal history, his identity is fluid.

Another mid-nineteenth century experience is that of Herzen, a Russian émigré living in Paris who was forced to leave because of the Revolution, moved around Europe, and wrote at length about his experiences: "Little by little I began to perceive that I had absolutely nowhere to go and no reason to go anywhere . . . I was conscious of power in myself . . . I grew more independent of everyone." As Richard Sennett has pointed out,

"Herzen began to paint in words what we might call a foreigner's landscape. This landscape contained two danger territories, the one a place of forgetting, the other of remembering, the one a condition in which the foreigner was demeaned by the desire to assimilate, the other in which he or she was destroyed by nostalgia. The advice which thus gradually takes form in the pages of Herzen's memoir about how to behave in the countries where the foreigner finds himself.³

The émigré is viewed in relationship to the society to which he or she goes. Material culture and intellectual paradigms have shifted away from manifestations of the nation state and industrialization, so perhaps a different lens is needed with which to examine the international movements of people both from an individual and community perspective. The displaced person needs to be redefined and replaced. (Note my emphasis of shifting intellectual paradigms - the realities are somewhat different where we are witnessing the dramatic throes of both nationalist and ethnic assertions of identity in Eastern Europe and Africa in a brutal and bloody way.) The foreigner is in a curious position: he or she cannot become a universal citizen, cannot throw off the mantle of nationalism, and must cope with the heavy baggage of culture by subjecting it to displacement, lightening its burden. The issue of displacement has taken on very different connotations from its

emergence out of nation states. The way in which the displaced person is regarded is different from the way Isaiah Berlin wrote about Herzen as the individual spirit in *Against the Current*.⁴ In the movement of people one can as easily be a stranger in one's own land as much as a collection of people can be strangers in Boston.

I would argue that the traditional concept of foreigner within today's mobile and migratory societies is no longer valid, and that with it the notion of "the other" is rather a defense mechanism that creates artificial boundaries. The notion that boundaries can be destroyed remains untested and it is likely that "difference" in the expressions of identity and self are here to stay in the foreseeable future. Speaking from my own experience, the imagined reality of my original home, Pakistan, remains in my mind even though I have lived outside it for some thirty years. It is a reality that no longer exists and is different every time I revisit the place. It is this notion of personal displacement that can be extended to that of architectural expression.

We are confronted with the duality of universality and particularization in our everyday life and environment. To simplify, universality can be said to be manifested in building through a form of internationalism of building types such as airports, assembly-line factories, and hospitals. Particularization, or

regionalism, is more easily illustrated through vernacular building types that have established a tradition in terms of image, style, function, technology, and construction—such as houses, religious structures, and schools. In today's world, internationalism and regionalism are the two poles of a dialectic within which architects have to operate. And with the rapidly advancing state of international communication and transmission of ideas, it appears almost impossible not to be influenced by international developments, basing buildings strictly on a local or regional tradition. Yet it may also be dangerous to “invent the future”, one of Buckminster Fuller's phrases, without reference to tradition.

One can look at the phenomenon of displacement, of transformation, and of change expressed through the example of regionalist building. Do we really understand what is “authentic” about our buildings? I am reminded of a description of this by William Carlos Williams in *America and Alfred Stieglitz* where he writes: “They saw birds with rusty breasts and called them robins. Thus from the start, an America of which they could have no inkling drove the first settlers upon their past. They retreated for warmth and reassurance to something previously familiar but at a cost. For what they saw were not robins.”⁵ The example is slight but interesting enough to illustrate the split that occurs; that vision again is

steeped in the myth of the foreigner and presents one side of the tale. It has its parallel in the architecture of the house. Do we know how to read the architecture of a place that is not our own? Indeed, does the issue of authenticity matter at all?⁶

A number of architects in Asia and Africa have tried to bring together in the dwelling the realm of indigenous tradition with that of modernity. Hassan Fathy (1900-89), the great Egyptian architect, was viewed as a champion of the indigenous; his houses were seen as expressions of the vernacular. Upon closer examination, however, one notices that his elegant buildings are not rooted in any one place but rather embody several places and traditions. By using different traditions which find resonance with those looking at them, he created what might be called an ‘instant vernacular’. Similarly, the work of Geoffrey Bawa (1919 -) in Sri Lanka or Laurie Baker (1920 -) in India reinterpret the vernacular in different ways to produce works that ‘improve’ upon and modernize traditional architecture. In another vein, adolescent men on the island of Mayotte in the Indian Ocean add the accouterments of modernity to their dwellings, e.g., telephones and refrigerators which do not work—indeed cannot work as there is no electricity on the island. They present their own image of modernity to others and to themselves.

These houses are contemporary buildings that reflect either a break with the past and home or interpret and change tradition through the individual's own vernacular or through someone else's referring to well-established models—Mediterranean houses, Regency villas, etc.—and bring them together in an often eclectic ensemble. Whatever the inspiration and model, the house becomes an individual's statement, or a family



photos courtesy C. Avadarian, Aga Khan Trust for Culture

Mit Rehen (1981), Shobroment near Cairo by Hassan Fathy. Here the architect has interpreted different traditional Egyptian forms and used a construction technology that is not local to produce a new ‘instant vernacular.’

statement, that communicates the image of a family and in turn of society at large.

Architecture interprets and mediates realities. Are these interpretations authentic, are they “real”? Constructing buildings, indeed constructing experiences, using the same vocabularies as that of tradition, but in a more sophisticated way, means that historical information so absorbed assumes the aspect

of reincarnation. What relationship does this architectural expression have to the “real” thing — the vernacular which has evolved over many years? Or is the new expression the real thing? To quote from an essay by Umberto Eco: “To speak of things that one wants to connote as real, these things must seem real. The ‘completely real’ becomes identified with the ‘completely fake’. Absolute unreality is offered as a real presence. The aim . . . is to supply a ‘sign’ that will be forgotten as such. The philosophy is not that we are giving you the reproduction so that you will want the original but rather that we are giving you the enhanced reproduction so that you will forget the original.” The reproduction becomes the original; architecture transforms the past.

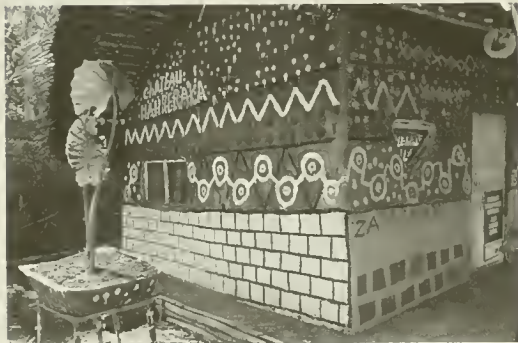
Buildings by their very state of being communicate to people. Creating an environment that “feels right” raises the question of simulation. How do we judge a satisfying mendacity? How do we project the authenticity of locality in an increasingly global culture in which regions are not easily definable? What relationship does architectural expression in a new situation have with the object “back home” born within a definable architectural tradition? To speak of inheriting and extending a tradition into different realms does not mean copying, but rather absorbing the principles behind earlier solutions and transforming

them into new vocabularies suitable to changed attitudes and environments.

For new architecture to express cultural roots, what may be called the “deep structures” have not only to be transferred but also transformed if they are to take root in new situations. Nineteenth century nationalism established what we might call the modern ground-rule for having an identity: You have the strongest identity when you are least aware of having it. And the twentieth century realities of pan-national multi-culturalism, multi-national economic forces, and global communications also bring the reality of a lowest common denominator against which individuals and the nation-state are reacting.

Manifestations of a self-conscious identity, such as the house, relate individual experience to new community. People entering a community affect that community, expressing identity through their built public architecture. An illustration of this is the symbolic mosque built by immigrant communities in societies which are predominantly non-Muslim. These buildings are conscious statements of Muslim presence in the West, distinguishable from mosques built by communities for everyday use such as African-American storefront mosques in Philadelphia or New York. In general, the “symbolic” mosques are found in cities, capitals

The Banga on the island of Mayotte in the Indian Ocean is a one-room dwelling decorated and lived-in by adolescent boys. This mud house, the “Chateau Mahrerhaka,” simulates the use of ‘modern’ blacks and its interior contains objects such as the telephone, fan and a loudspeaker cabinet, all of which have no power supply.



photos courtesy C. Lignon

or settlements with international groups, and are built by Muslims of different origins and backgrounds. They serve as indicators of how a particular religious group sees itself within a new or different cultural context.⁸

Early mosques, like England's first purpose-built mosque in Woking, Surrey, a version of the Indian Mughal mosques of Lahore and Delhi, was completed in 1889. Similarly, the Paris mosque built in the 1920s was modeled on Andalusian architecture. During the 1950s and '60s, significant numbers of Muslims began to emigrate to Europe and North America, and projects for post-colonial mosques expressing Muslim presence in non-Muslim countries began to take shape. By the 1960s the burgeoning immigrant communities had taken on an essentially bourgeois outlook and desired to express their presence by articulating new mosques.

Mosques built in foreign cultural settings are characterized by three tendencies: firstly, the design is tempered by the local context, modified by local laws and regulations and sometimes by local community pressures. Secondly, the design refers back to historical or regional Islamic traditions and the physical form is usually influenced by one dominant style from a country or region, depending on who is financing, designing or leading the project. Lastly, the interiors of the prayer halls tend to be

exuberant and often eclectic collections of styles and ornament that proclaim the space as being particularly Islamic.

The physical impact on space, on neighborhood, and indeed on social interaction, is clearly demonstrated by such buildings. Moreover, the mosque operates within the modern city, a place where other social or religious groups will also produce such manifestations, making everyone both foreign and native to place. For example, the Islamic Center (1957), Washington, DC, clearly reveals its Mamluk antecedents, using a traditional language that proclaims 'the Other' belonging to another culture and tradition. In another vein, the Manhattan Islamic Center (1991) presents an integrative mode of the modern New York Muslim.

From the architectural expressions of identity illustrated by the house and the mosque, I draw two conditions which arise from the act of displacement. The first deals with the cultural baggage one brings into a new situation: the idea of the foreigner who regards the new situation as an extension or transfer of "home." The second deals with the break from the past and the expression of a transformed identity. What now seems apparent is that architecture must be viewed from multiple perspectives as a mediating space between values and their expression. The concept of mediating realities⁹ is more nuanced and useful,



"WOULD YOU BE SO GOOD," HE SAID, "I WILL BUILD FOR YOU A CHINESEMAN FIRST PRIZE AND NATIONALIST VILLA WITH AUTHENTIC INTERIORS AND EXTERIORS," AND HE SAID, "OK," LITTLE CREAMING THAT."

cartoon by Robert L. Miller

compared to that of most modern discourse which is structured around opposing categories of thought, e.g. religious and secular, modernity and tradition. Not enough attention has been paid to architecture as occupying the ground between socio-political collectivities and the individual psyche—perhaps it is on this level of ethos that the wider significance of architecture is best understood.

The expression of cultural identity is difficult and never was the unified phenomenon that its promoters or its detractors pretended. We are still very far from any consensus of regional style in architecture. Indeed, the more I look at building around the world the less enthusiastic I become about unified ideas on style or even so-called principles of architecture that deal with identity—those of the Tropical City, or the Islamic City, or expressions of ethnic or national aspirations. As the world becomes more global in nature, the more the need for

The Islamic Center of Greater Toledo (1983 by Talat Itil) uses pan-Islamic symbols easily recognized by both Muslims and non-Muslims. The center clearly exposes a Muslim presence in the region.



photo courtesy Reich Library, MIT, Aga Khan Program collection

The Islamic Center of Rome (1977 by Paolo Portoghesi, Sami Maassawi and Vittoria Gogliatti) combines Ottoman domes, a modified minaret, and the forest of columns inspired by the Great Mosques in Tlemcen and Cordoba.



pluralism becomes apparent. The fact that bio-diversity in nature is a sign of health is one from which architectural expression can learn. Different expressions of architecture within one place or situation seems to be a healthy one. It is a reality in which we will have to learn to live. This may sound like the advocating of architectural anarchy—but if this expression is drawn from the uses of history, from context and uses of structure, ornament, religion, region, and climate, and all this is charged with a meaning and symbolism valid today, then there is an opportunity to portray any situation honestly.

The “foreigner” and expressions of the “self” have to be placed within the recent construct of the simultaneous globalization and particularization of cultures. The “other” is everywhere — we cannot remain “Waiting for the Barbarians,” the title of a poem by C. P. Cavafy:

The barbarians are to arrive today.

Why are the streets and squares rapidly emptying?

and why is everyone going back home so lost in thought?

Because it is night and the barbarians have not come

And some say that barbarians don't exist any longer.

And now, what will become of us without barbarians?

They were a kind of solution.¹⁰

Today, technology and communications can permit the simultaneous handling and overlays of different realities within one space, but individual and national interests are not permitting this. Cultural mobility, tourism and economic exchanges all contribute to a “leveling” of life and lifestyles. Yet telecommunications, satellite television, and the world wide web allow not only for globalization but also for the expression of individual concerns. The individual and societal identity can be simultaneously projected and real-

ized. We lose something of ourselves to gain something else of ourselves—it is not a new process. Change, especially within periods of economic recession, cause boundaries to remain and new ones to set in as mechanisms of self-definition. We have the means to displace boundaries but not the will to do so. Even if boundaries are displaced they are usually replaced by others, and I can see that the need for cultural idealization remaining strong. The possibility in practice of re-envisioning ourselves as concrete particular human beings rather than as cultural types can occur—and the idea of crossing and dissolving boundaries is an important one.

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- 1 This is the title of Paul Gauguin's painting of 1897 (in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts), which is a monumental and mythic work designed to embody a total philosophy of life and civilization.
- 2 Introduction by Jonathan Raban to Robert Louis Stevenson's 1895 work *The Amateur Emigrant*, New York, 1984.
- 3 Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts*, Vol. III, p. 1024 as quoted in an unpublished paper, "Foreigner", by Richard Sennett, presented at the Urban Forum conference on "Ethnicity, Migration and the City", New York, 1980, p. 28.
- 4 Isaiah Berlin's essay on Herzen intelligently romanticizes Herzen's experience and writings to emphasize the triumph of individualism and transformation of self. However, the characterization of looking at Herzen from outside his nineteenth-century context is mine alone in order to illustrate the disconnection between the individual and society away from well-established precepts of the Outsider in literature as viewed by Camus, or more recently Rushdie in his essay "Imaginary Homelands."
- 5 From the book *Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams*, "America and Alfred Stieglitz", New Directions, New York, 1969, p. 134.
- 6 The architectural critic William Curtis in an essay "Contemporary Transformations of Modern Architecture" in *Architectural Record*, June 1989, stressed the importance of authenticity when he wrote: "To get to the heart of a master work is also to encounter fundamentals that are timeless. The contemporary talent draws what it needs from predecessors but the aim is a new amalgam that touches deep levels. Profound works articulate a philosophy of life, a vision of the way things ought to be."
- 7 Umberto Eco, in an essay, "Travels in Hyper Reality," 1975.
- 8 See my essay, "The Architecture of the Mosque: an overview and design directions" in *Expressions of Islam in Buildings*, Aga Khan Trust for Culture, Geneva, 1991, pp. 109-127. Also, Renata Holod and Hasan-Uddin Khan, *Contemporary Mosques* (to be published in 1997) where data on such manifestations of mosques has been analyzed and discussed.
- 9 The Ismaili thinker Aziz Esma'il has written eloquently about this notion (not necessarily pertaining to architecture). See "Meaning in Tradition Today" in *Criticism in Architecture*, Singapore, 1989, pp. 65-68.
- 10 The Egyptian-born Greek poet C. P. Cavafy or Kavafis (1863-1933) characterized "the other" in a manner similar to Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot". "Waiting for the Barbarians" is quoted from *The Complete Poems of C. P. Cavafy*, translated by Rae Dalverny, New York, 1964.



13



photos courtesy Rotch Library, MIT, Aga Khan Program collection

The Islamic Center in Christiansburg, Virginia was built in a conservative area and strongly expressed a Muslim presence. However, within a few years, community unease led to the withdrawal of the Muslim community and the building was purchased and transformed by a Christian group. They modified the dome into a lantern and the minaret into a steeple.



stills

Trinh T. Minh-ha and Jean-Paul Bourdier

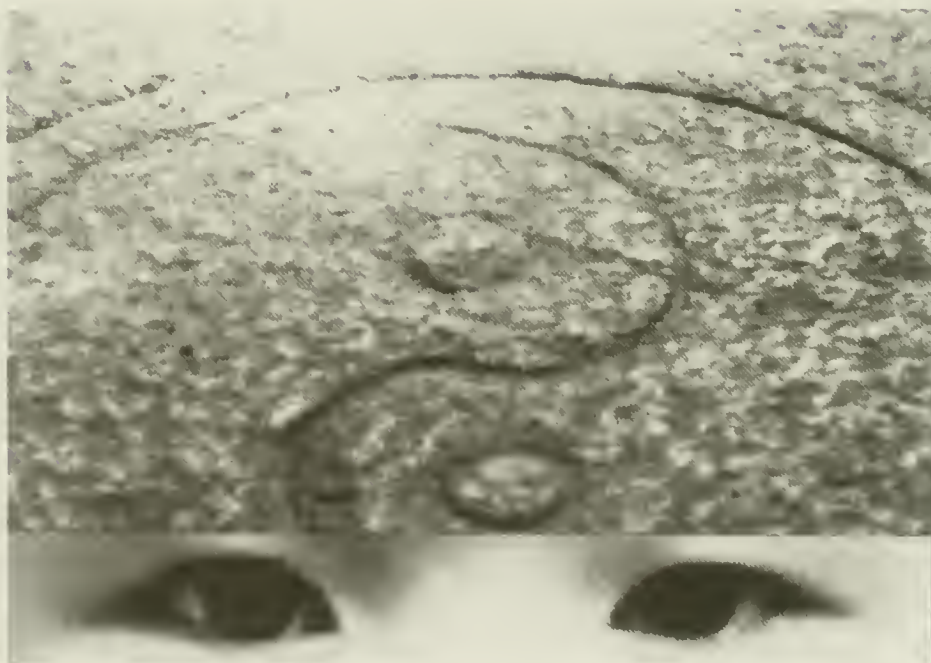
- 1 The more an image is 'true to nature,' the more it lies.
- 2 Between the diurnal and the nocturnal is the third term.



- 3 Reality is set into motion as it travels between the countries of light and of night, and shifts its boundaries as it moves from one marking, one territory, one light to another.



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Right
對
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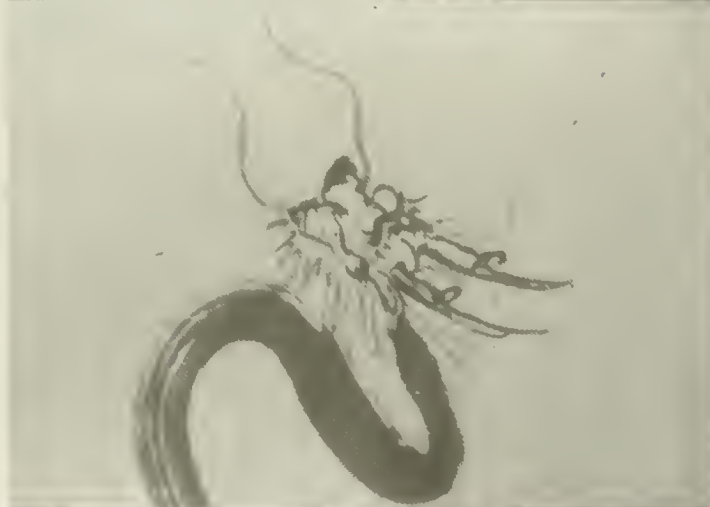
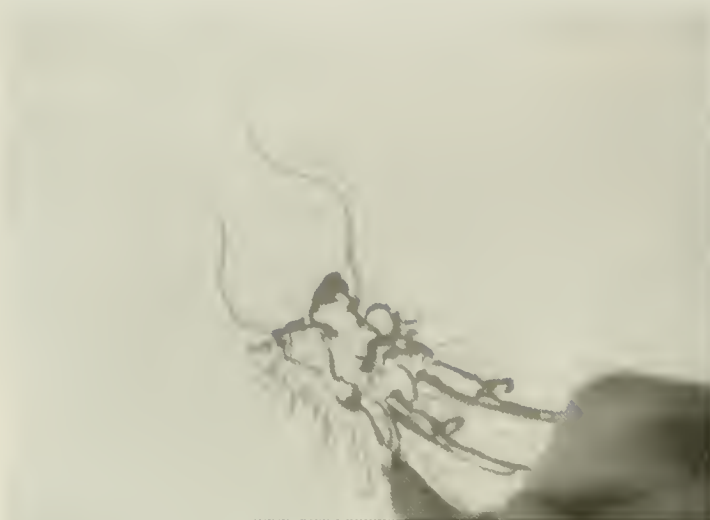


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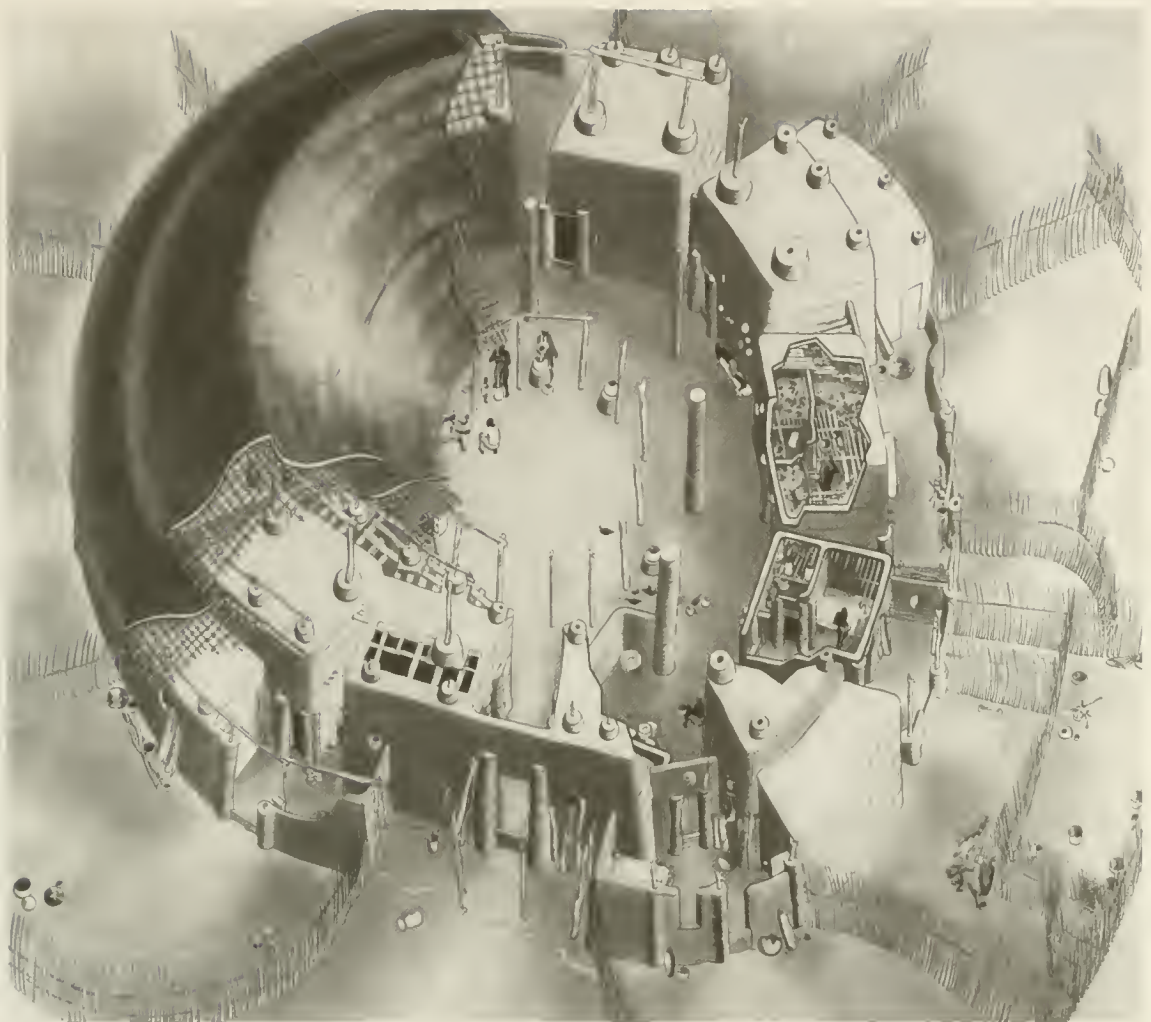


3

⁴ The Median Way: faring in between, giving in to neither side, one can assume with intensity one's freedom of movement.



5 The natural lies at
the edge of nature
and culture.

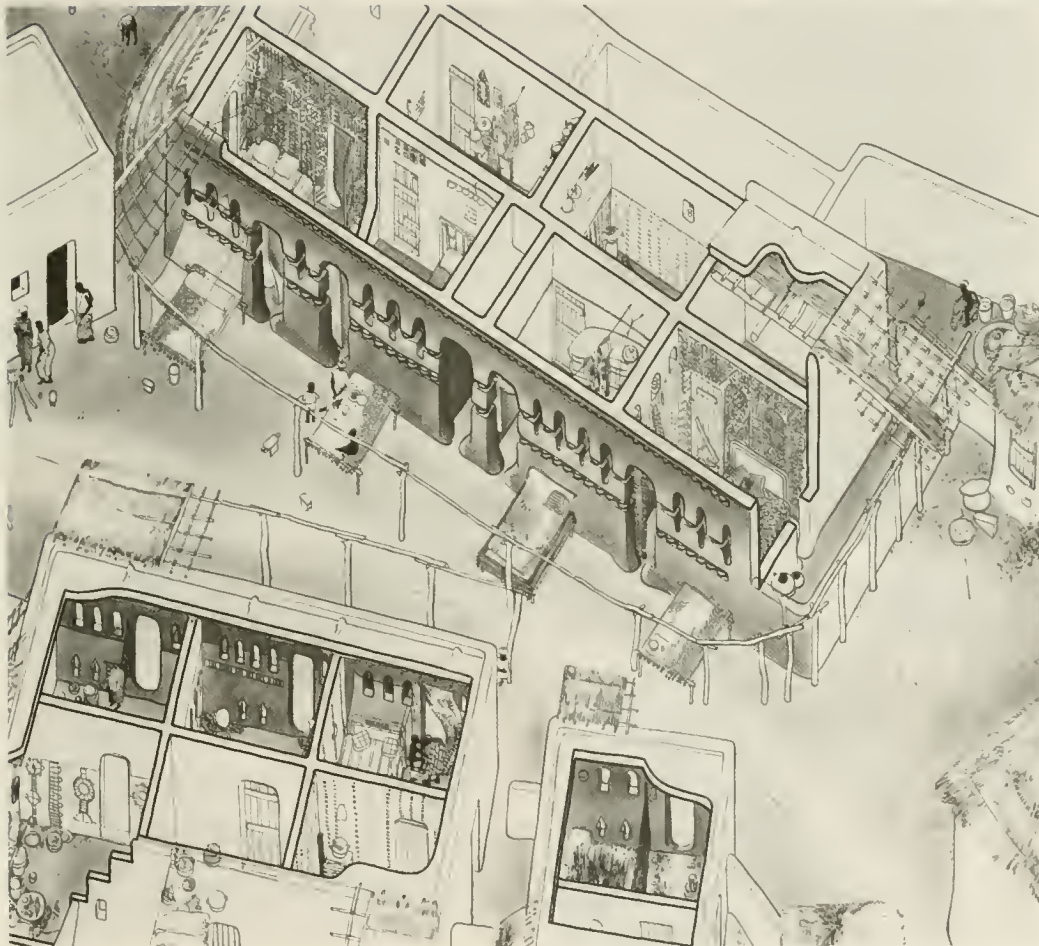


- 6 The cutaway axonometric exposes its limits as an activity of notation and transformation. The drawer's intervention is persistently acknowledged, as much through the graphic work as through the deliberate cutting away of a space. In the reading journey, more than one visualization is involved at a time. The reader's path(s) remains unpredictable as it constantly undergoes transformations in its temporary stops and renewed departures.

- 7 To speak about the concept of border-crossing as a major theme in contemporary cultural politics is further to empty it, get rid of it, or else let it drift – preventing it from both settling down and being ‘resettled.’ One is bound through speaking and writing to assert one’s ability to displace all attempts (including one’s own) to rehabilitate key concepts, for the politics of the word or the ‘verbal struggle’ as Mao called it, will never end.



- 8 Giving an above-the-ground view but allowing the reader to reconstitute an on-the-ground experience, the cutaway axonometric suggests an understanding of how the spaces interact while inviting the reader to imagine the experience of walking through several spaces, through offered and hidden views. With graphic operations that cut in, show through, become mixed and hence mutate, reading no longer proceeds by following a vertical or horizontal dimension but by moving in both ways at once, as well as in diagonals and curves, flying above while walking in and through, making detours to find a familiar path, and repeating an old trajectory only to reorient itself toward a new direction.





男

女

man

Woman



9 Entry into and exit from refugee status is neither voluntary nor simply involuntary. From one category, one label to another, the only way to survive is to refuse. Refuse to become an integratable element. Refuse to allow names arrived at transitionally to become stabilized. The intervals between refuge, refused, refuse (noun) and refuse (verb) are constantly played out. If despite their relation, noun and verb inhabit the two very different and well-located worlds of designated and designator, the space in-between them remains a surreptitious site of movement and passage whose open communal character makes exclusive belonging and long-term residence undesirable, if not impossible.

10 The fragile nature of the intervals in which one thrives requires that, as a mediator-creator, one always travels transculturally while engaging in the local 'habitus' (or collective practices that link habit with inhabitation) of one's immediate concern. Refuse. Return. Resonance sets into motion and sustains all creative processes.



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Jean-Paul Bourdier, Associate Professor of Architecture at the University of California Berkeley, is the co-author of *African Spaces. Designs for Living in Upper Volta*, the editor and co-founder of *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, co-editor of *Dwellings, Settlements and Tradition*, and Principal of the architectural firm Bourdier & Walton.

Text excerpted and rearranged from *Drawn from African Dwellings* by Jean-Paul Bourdier and Trinh T. Minh-ha (forthcoming at Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, 1996).



Le Corbusier and the Aerial Gaze

Adnan Morshed

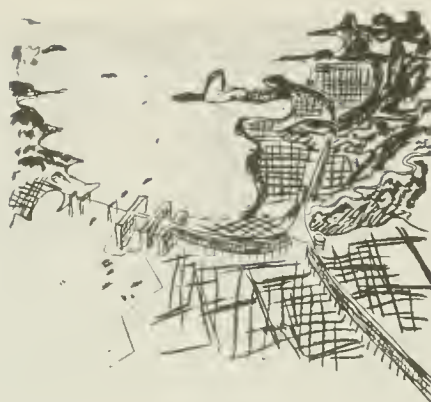
When Le Corbusier arrived in Buenos Aires in October 1929 to deliver a series of lectures on architecture and urbanism, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry was the young pilot and director of Aeropostal Argentina, an affiliate of the pioneering French Compagnie Générale Aéropostale. Saint-Exupéry, Guillaumet, and Mermoz were among the first pilots to fly with the company, and they opened numerous routes on the continent. Le Corbusier had the chance to participate in flights with these pilots over what he called the “integral” landscape of South America. Saint-Exupéry described his experiences of flight in one of the most important literary works at the time, *Vol de Nuit*, while Le Corbusier described his in *Precisions* (1930) and *Aircraft* (1935). Interestingly, both of them viewed the experience of flight as a far-reaching moral and ontological inquiry into worldly phenomena. For both, the flying man symbolized the observer of truth from a special vantage point and, in turn, the heroic builder of a new civilization.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, mankind’s ability to fly by means of heavier-than-air machines ushered in new modes of viewing the world.¹ These modes marked a significant departure from the imagined and framed bird’s-eye views of the Renaissance tradition as well as the complex iconographic compilations of medieval *mappae-mundi*. Long mythologised as the territory of the

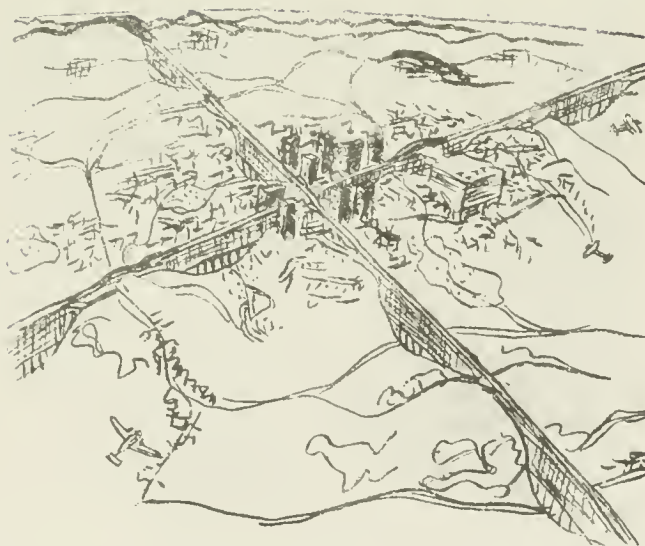
divine, the miracle of flight, once achieved, endowed mankind with a new sense of omnipotence and inspired an extraordinary outpouring of utopian hope.

Seen in this vein, aviation had a two-fold cultural impact: to be liberated from bourgeois consciousness and discover the world anew; and to conquer and control space. The modernist avant-garde (artists and intellectuals like Marinetti, Delaunay, Apollinaire, and Proust) synthesized the “counter-cultural” elements of the pre-war years with a new spatial dynamics created by the perceived uplifting of human consciousness through airplanes.² A significant body of literature centered around the theme of conquest and aerial warfare during the period. Rudolf Martin’s *Berlin-Baghdad* (1907) and H.G. Wells’ *The War in the Air* (1908) depicted a web of European imperial politics through graphic detail of aerial warfare. The novels of Wells, Martin, and others advanced the vision of militarized aviation fused with nationalistic fervor.

In the pre-war period, France occupied a central position in the development of aviation. During the years before 1914, the French identified themselves as the “winged nation” par excellence,³ with activities centered around Paris. It was a Frenchman, Louis Bleriot, who was the first to fly the English Channel, and it was the French who organized the first successful aviation competition, staged the first



2



3

exhibition of aircraft, opened the first flight training schools, and led the world in the manufacture of airplanes.⁴ E.T. Marinetti's first Futurist manifesto was published in the direct aftermath of Wilbur Wright's triumphant flights in France.

Le Corbusier's formative years coincided with this pre-war aviation culture in France. (Fig. 1) Although his first aerial experience was the flight from Paris to Moscow in 1928,⁵ his trip to South America in 1929 and North Africa in 1931 gave him unique opportunities to experience reconnaissance flights within these continents. During these flights, he produced a number of urban design proposals for Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, Buenos Aires, as well as his urban scheme for Algiers, "Plan Obus." All these proposals propel a vision triggered by aerial experience. The initial sketches, some actually done during the flight and others improvised during his lecture series, offer us a visual basis to study the relationship between the aerial gaze and spatial distribution. Le Corbusier's sketches are particularly instructive for a number of historical reasons: first, not until the late twenties did access to commercial flight become common and aerial photography was used for military surveys, journalistic reporting, and city planning; and second, as is well known, Le Corbusier was fascinated with airplanes since 1909, when the French aviator Louis Bleriot crossed the English Channel. What is most interesting, however, is the way in which the aerial gaze effected a radical departure from the spatial distribution in Le Corbusier's earlier planning work. The paradigmatic geometric order of the *Ville Contemporaine* (1922) and the *Plan Voisin* (1925) was now replaced by a sinuous organizational device based on the viaducts of Rio and Algiers.

The urban design sketches for South American cities remained at elementary and conceptual levels. (Fig. 2 & 3) There are three main features in them: the geography, the viaduct which Le Corbusier calls the "earthscraper", and the horizon. The sketchy pen lines capture the undulating landscape in its quintes-

sential form. Interestingly, in all the sketches, the existing urban fabric is interpreted as a landscape. All the minute details of the existing city are eliminated - only the vital topographical lines remain. It is apparent that upon seeing the vast landscape, Le Corbusier simultaneously carried out a work of imagination and reform. The numerous flights over Rio, Montevideo, Buenos Aires, and Sao Paulo not only enabled him to see the geographic “truth”⁶ of the vast landscape where he discovered the “law of the meander”⁷ of South American rivers but also improved the optical perimeter of world watching. Moreover, it gave him what Bruno Pedretti calls “a cosmically atomized way of operating,”⁸ on a front continentally stretched. For Le Corbusier these flights did not simply celebrate and use aerial altitudes for innovative ends, but they also implied discovering a terrestrial morphology that provoked ontological and ethical inquiries. Among the many literary works that Le Corbusier carried with him during these flights were Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals* and Gide’s *Subterrain*,⁹ whose “polemics” found bold analogies in Le Corbusier’s radical rejection of the “existing world” which he could now see as well as reform with “godly” omnipotence allowed by the hyperfunctional glance of the airplane. His rhetorical note on the subject of aerial views: “The airplane = philosophy/thematic performance and no longer joy of the senses,” brings to the fore what Pierre-Alain Croset calls a condition of detachment (a moral condition in which a mental model is formed around aerial vision) which can be the premise for what Le Corbusier calls a “desire to change something in the existing world.”¹¹

Seen in the colonial context of Plan Obus in Algiers (Fig.4), the aerial gaze becomes doubly significant. On the one hand, it is a rediscovery of a world hitherto unknown from a privileged observation point in the sky; on the other, it is a kind of politicized aerial reconnaissance used to reprogram the existing city through an artificial terrain of megastructures. These megastructures acquire a planetary scale and an atmospheric composition, more intelligible from



4

above than from below where the real city and its inhabitants exist — an intervention critiqued in “aerial” terms by historians Zeynep Celik and Mary McLeod, and by newspaper critic Jean Cotereau, who referred to the Plan Obus as a “bombardment d’Alger.”¹² The viaduct here matches the terrestrial geography as “the only line that can harmonize with the vehement caprices of the mountains,”¹³ the comprehension of which was made possible through aerial viewing, and a detachment from what is earthbound.

With the aerial experience, we see in Le Corbusier’s sketches the utopic idea of a viaduct city invoked by a geographical and nomadic consciousness. Geographical, because, like the Roman aqueduct, Le Corbusier’s inhabited viaduct engages in formal reordering of earth’s surface - a reordering which simultaneously does away with any kind of fixity and compresses the whole landmass that the eye could see from the airplane. Nomadic, because the viaduct city seems to embody modern mass society’s fetishistic desire to flow, move, and conquer the *beyond*—the diasporic culture propelled by what Daniel Bell has called the “megalomania of self-infinetization,”¹⁴ combined with the anxiety of placelessness. The ‘nomadic’ itinerary of the viaduct intersects with the continual flux of the urban working class whom are housed within it. The symbolic content of the auto-express way on the top

of the viaduct only to corroborates the picture of a society in relentless movement. In Corbusier's viaduct city, one finds the formal precedence of Constant Nieuwenhuijs's theoretical urban project "New Babylon" (1960) which "reckons with the perpetual growth of traffic, the cultivation of the whole planet, and total urbanization."¹⁵ Le Corbusier's hypothetical section across the whole continent of South America supports this idea of "total urbanization." (Fig.5)

Seeing the world at a traveling point of observation, over a long enough time for a sufficiently extended set of paths, begins to be perceiving the world at all points of observation, as if one could be everywhere at once. To be everywhere at once with nothing hidden is to be all-seeing, like God. Each object is seen from all sides, and each place is seen as connected to its neighbor.¹⁶

The viaduct—the inhabited infrastructure of what Le Corbusier calls the World City¹⁷—which spreads all across the landscape like life-sustaining veins in the human body, provides us with a visual and formal analog of "[being] everywhere at once...all-seeing, like God." Latent in Le Corbusier's planning of viaducts are also attempts to reorder the polarized conditions of colonial urbanism. The bi-polarity of port cities as colonial extraction points of resources contrasted with the interior countryside as the potential site of native resistance, is rectified through a geographic network of inhabited infrastructure. Janet Abu-Lughod has cogently shown how the arrival of the colonial powers in North Africa in the nineteenth century (from the sea) reversed the ratio of the port city-interior city in favor of the port city.¹⁸ The port cities became the locus of territorial expansion as they provided a convenient extraction point of resources in the age of maritime activities. As the colonial project had its foundation in the maritime prowess of the European imperial powers, colonial urbanism developed around a network of port cities. In the case of North

Africa, port cities—both old revived ones (Algiers, Tunis, and Alexandria) or new ones (Casablanca, Ismailiya, Suez, and Port Saïd along the Suez Canal) began to exert control over the interior of the continent. The interior towns increasingly became resource sites, military control points, and places for an expanding European agriculture. This polarization substantiates how the mode of arrival in a territory can significantly impact the ways to discover and inhabit that territory. The earthbound arrival by ship created its own conditions for urbanism.

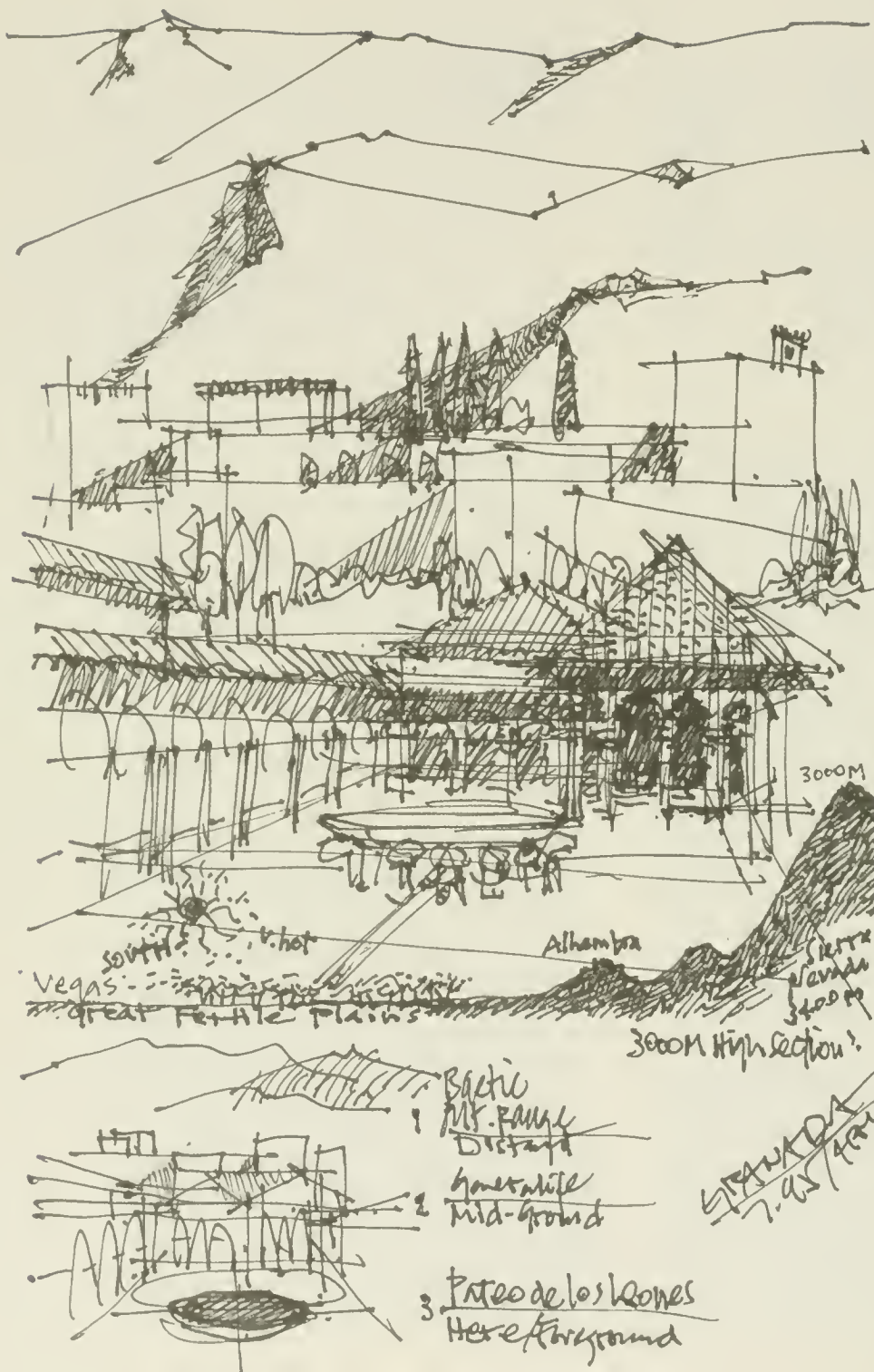
With aerial arrival and discovery, Le Corbusier's urban intervention marks a significant departure from the regional pattern and differential urban growth characteristic of colonial urbanism, although the Algiers project retained certain spatial hierarchies that distinguished European and local population. Here his geographic consciousness intersected with the political strategies of what Foucault calls the "disciplinary power." For Foucault, power in modern society is not simply a global relation between the sovereign, who monopolize the source of prohibitive power, and the subjects who are subordinate to this power. The "disciplinary power"¹⁹ does not proceed downwards from a single center; rather it is exercised through the entire social body in a nexus of diverse relations. The functioning of such a power system is less obvious and dependent not on oppressive force, but rather on the function of knowledge, surveillance, and transparency of people's lives. The omnipotence of Le Corbusier's aerial gaze seems to give Foucault's argument a radical twist in spatial terms. In the Corbusian program the whole territory, which he can survey most effectively and economically from a privileged distance, is internalized and then reordered by a network of inhabited infrastructures. This is not a compression of a territory by architectural means, but a dispersion in socio-spatial terms that engineers political goal. The working class, housed in the viaduct, is linearly dispersed over the region (potentially reducing the risk of uprising) but,



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- 3 Wahl, *A Passion for Wings*, p. 2.
- 4 *Ibid.* p.2.
- 5 See Jorge F. Liernur, "Le Corbusier and Argentina," paper presented at GSD, Fall 1996.
- 6 It is interesting to see how Le Corbusier differentiates between the earth-bound view and aerial view: "when one has gone up in a plane for observation and glided like a bird over all the bays, has turned around all the peaks, when one has entered the intimacy of a city, when one has torn away in a single glance of the gliding bird all the secrets that it hid so easily from the poor terrestrial on his two feet, one has seen everything, understood everything." *Precisions*, p. 235.
- 7 Le Corbusier, *Precisions*, pp. 5, 142.
- 8 Bruno Pedretti, "The Flight of Ethics," *Cosabella* 531-532, Jan-Feb 1987, p. 74.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 74.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p.4.
- 11 Le Corbusier, *Aircraft*, p.11.
- 12 Quoted in Mary Mcleod, "Le Corbusier and Algiers," *Oppositions*, n.19/20, 1980, p. 71.
- 13 Le Corbusier, *Precisions*, p. 245.
- 14 Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, (New York: 1976), p. 49.
- 15 Constant Nieuwenhuys, "New Babylon," in *Programs and Manifestoes on the 20th-century Architecture*, Ulrich Conrads, ed., trans. Michael Bullock, (Cambridge: 1964).
- 16 James Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, (Boston: 1979).
- 17 Le Corbusier, *Precisions*, p. 216.
- 18 Janet Abu-Lughod, "Developments in North African Urbanism: The Process of Decolonization," in *Urbanization and Counter-Urbanization*, Brian J.L. Berry, ed *Urban Affairs Annual Reviews*, Vol. 11, London: 1976.
- 19 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish, The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (New York: 1977), pp. 198-205.
- 20 *Ibid.*, pp. 208-209.

Image credits: Figure 1 from Wohl, Robert, *A Passion for Wings: Aviation and the Western Imagination*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 254 (New York: Universe 1985, original edition 1935, p. 6); Figures 2, 3, and 5 from Le Corbusier, *Previsions: On the Present State of Architecture and City Planning*, Cambridge: MIT Press; Figure 4 from Michele Lamparakos, "Le Corbusier and Algiers: The Plan Obus as Colonial Urbanism" from AlSayyad, Nezar, ed., *Forms of Dominance*, Brookfield USA: Ashgate, p.185 (Zürich: Verlag für Architektur (Artemis), 1967).



The for brought close-up, the near extending out: exchange of climate/scale/moderate-natural/ground-sky/temporal-permanent — all that is felt, evident, enduring sense of genius loci.

Time/Place Travels

Shun Kanda

Perhaps its the fact that we have to first fly to get somewhere distant that gives us this altered perspective—a state of mental levitation cut loose from the ground rules of daily routine and *savoir-faire*.

This early morning as I'm off on a short trip to Los Angeles and NWAir Flight #933 swoops upward, the passenger alongside mutters: "Visiting Chicago today...it's always colder there you know, the cold air rushing down from Canada along that ancient glacier path..." "Sure," I am nodding in response. "I wonder how the skyscrapers along the lake shore have affected that air flow?" Not quite certain if this made any sense to her, I am recalling how, as well, the 50 meter high sweeping wall of Kyoto Station now under construction, so concerned the young monk I met at Entsui-ji Temple last summer. The utter transformation of this ancient city situated in the foothill basin formed by mountains on three sides, aggravated him to no end: "There is now an obstructing wall to the south where there should be none...Kyoto will never again be the same!"

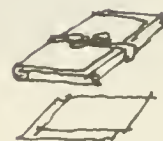
No doubt, the addictive joy I relish from each travel experience lies in the accumulation of such criss-crossing states of perceptions. It is as if I relinquish my usual self to a self-inflicted vulnerability—a welcome, temporal condition totally receptive to uninhibited encounters with every step waiting ahead.

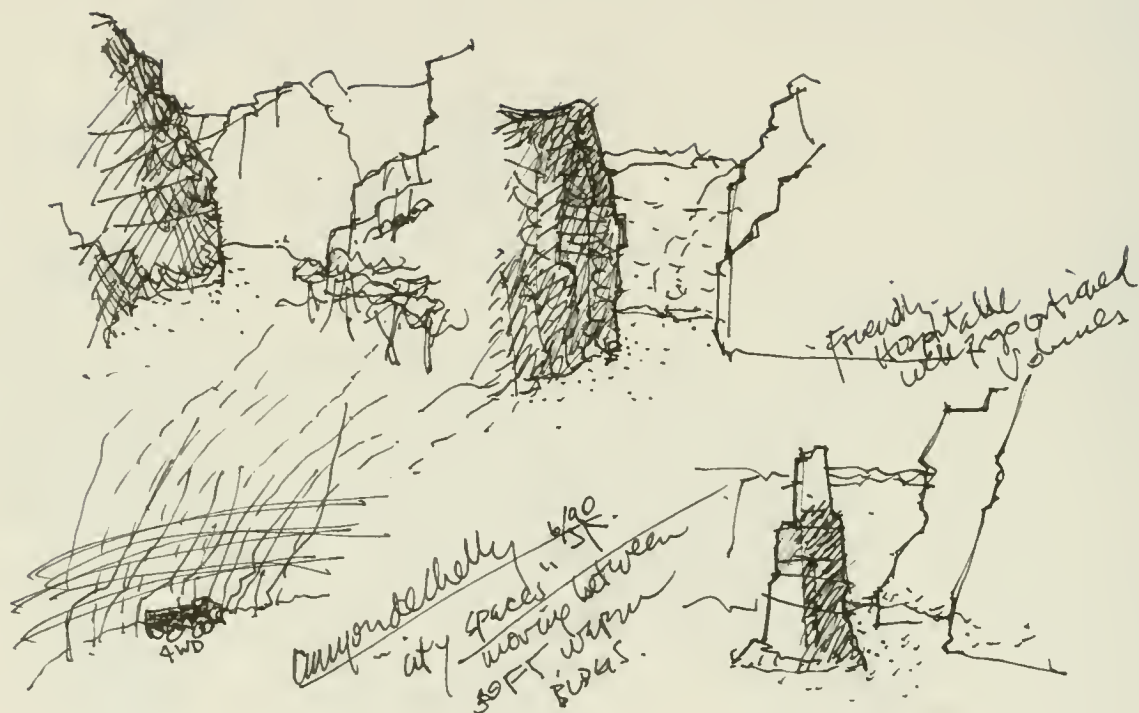
Ever tantalizing and rewarding, the allure of travel is the freedom to lose oneself, only to recover reconstructed orientations and reconnected insights of time/place realities. While travel affords glimpses into infinity—a distancing from the present—it also makes all such revelations palpable, personal and memorable.

With travel, one can surpass vicarious knowledge. When I find myself in the actual place among people who have built their town over time, a passer-by amidst their sensate environment—curiously noting their speech, gestures, the food and the eyes that regard—I am that itinerant participant immersed in those fleeting moments, internalizing the presence of people in such a magnificent and vast array of settings.

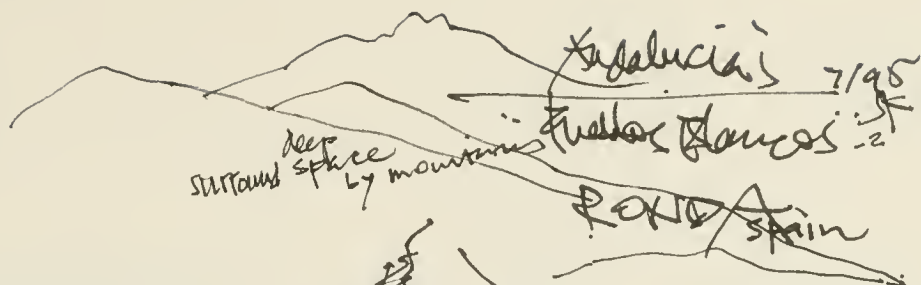
Quite without intent, for obligatory tasks are anathema when one sets out to travel, I have kept up with sketches on 5" x 8" index unbound note-cards as a convenient form of graphic diary. Sometimes drawn from memory of the day's experiences, often from a moving window, the urge is always there to somehow possess that sensation of a particular time/place in some form later retrievable.

In this sense, these sketches represent loose fragments of my mind's journey surreptitiously, and hopefully, weaving lived-in time/place crossings.



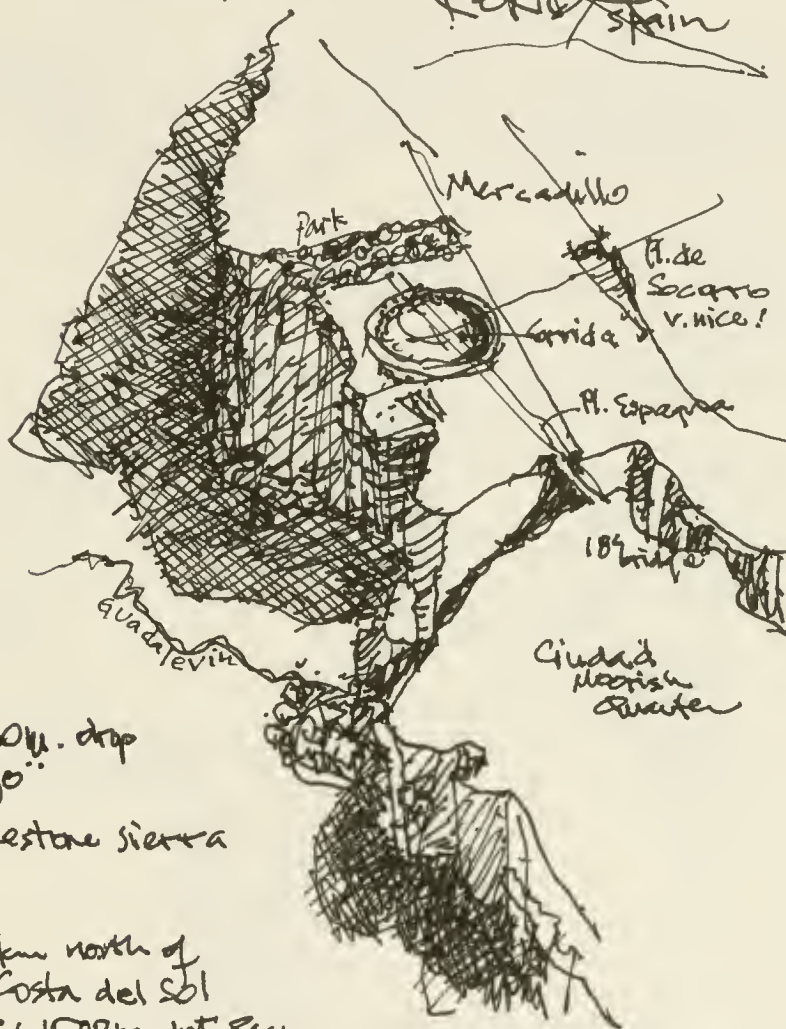


Deep space, space between surfaces/
mass, silent, dynamic...surprisingly
benign despite immensity—an
acoustically charged space, the air so
sweet—an unworldly place! The
Navaho guide always seemed to
begin his descriptions with a "When
my forefathers..."



deep
surround space
by mountains

Plazas
de TOROS

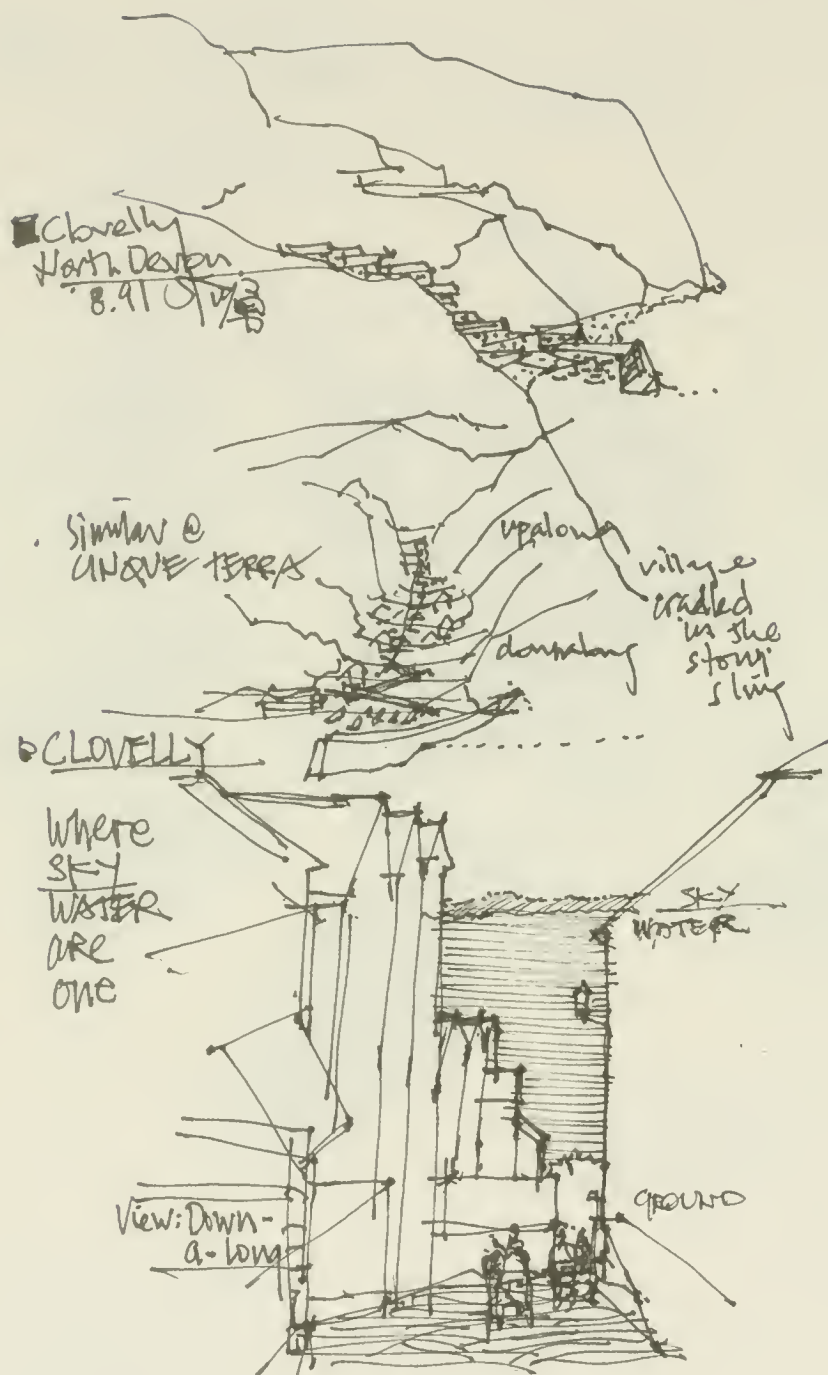


Gorge: 130m. drop
"Tajo"

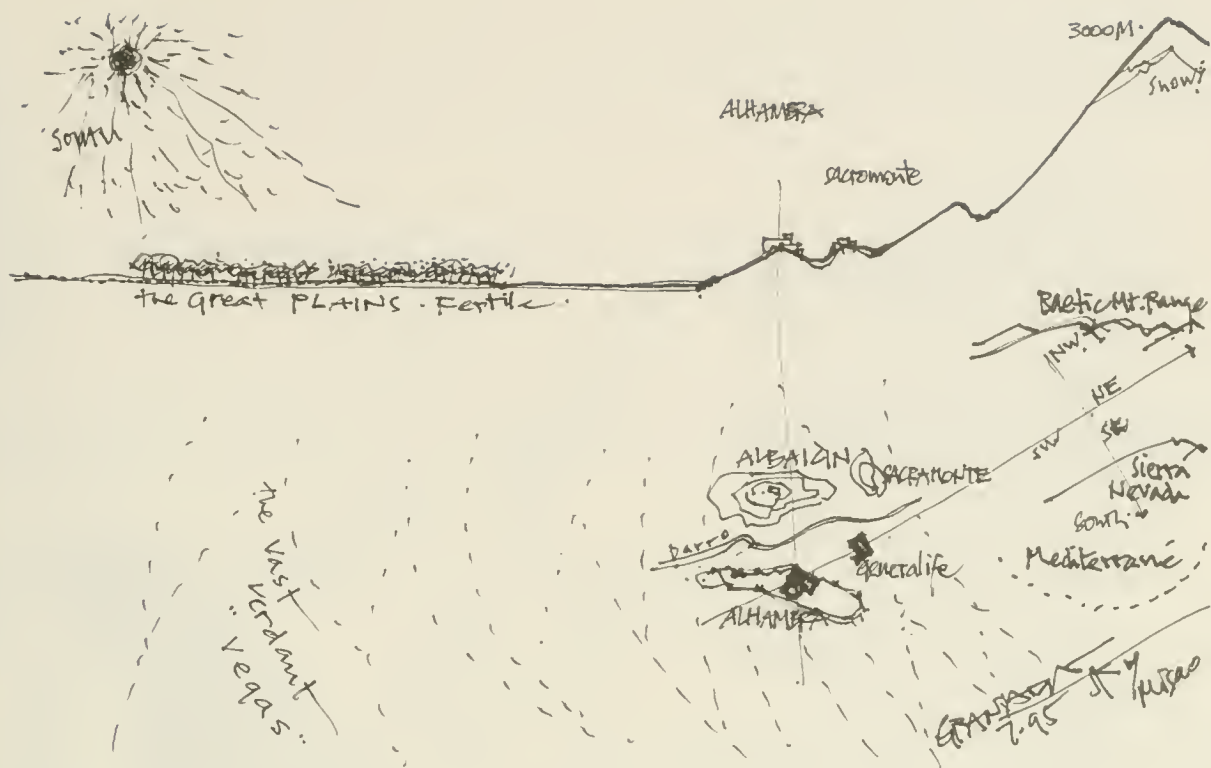
: limestone sierra

50 km north of
Costa del Sol
over 1500m. mt. Pass
....

Present in Space, in the aura of
space: the physical boundaries of
the distant mountain range, the
gorge at your body's side—the
weight of the air mass, stillness, the
vaporous space touched by slowly
changing light.



A north facing hamlet, like the moss clinging to the sunless side of ancient cryptomeria trunk; light travels across the sea surface beyond the town - beckoning to come out there to the openness beyond, to step out to the stage basking in light. The town pulls back, secured to the carved folds in the cliff, permanently.



Water at Alhambra: in the unrelenting heat of Andalusia's summer, how very cold the water at Alhambra! The wisdom of channeling the cooled air and water rushing down from the snow-capped mountains; the marvel of hydraulics aside, the unusual effort in its siting & construction certainly paid off for those 14th century caliphs!

The two great cities of Kyoto and Tokyo differ in one significant water-related topology: Kyoto lies at the base of high surrounding mountain ranges gurgling pure, delicious water; Tokyo lies flat in the vast lowlands of Kanto Plains. The result: Kyoto unmistakably boasts of its excellent local sake, Tokyo brews none.

Memories: Tower x Bridge

Sung Ho Kim

SITE

"In December 1950, May 25th Division Reconnaissance Company fought the rear-guard action out of here. The Chinese and North Korean forces have pummeled General Walton Walker's Eighth Army in the most decisive defeat of US. arms of this century. They whipped us up north on the Yalu River, and we were on the run, dragging a big defeat hangover. Heading south seemed the only cure. Seoul was just another pit stop during a frozen nightmare journey of death. In my sector of Seoul, just north of the Han River bridge, the only living things were the Reds digging in on the hill-sides, 25 worn-out Recon men trying to stay alive, and rats eating the corpses littering the streets and shell torn; bridges, cars, trains and buildings. . . Still on the DMZ, two awesome aims are squared off, in their bunkers, behind the world's most fortified potential killing field. . . If the intelligence wizards have it right, there's about one million armed-to-the-teeth men facing each other within about 100 mile zone, and 89 million in reserve."¹

The two and a half mile wide, 150 mile long strip of ground between North and South Korea has remained largely untrodden by all but a handful of soldiers and truce negotiators for 40 years now, and in that period nature has steadily worked to resurrect its own best form: the endangered Manchurian crane, an ancient symbol of longevity, is said to be nesting and thriving again.

Inside the DMZ, among the anti-tank wall, a live mine field, and a double barbed-wire fence, the proposed bridge extends across the Sachon River in the truce village of Panmunjom. Nine miles away, the tower stands on the severed railroad track where south to north and Seoul to Pyong-Yang was once connected. DMZ is the territory inscribed by the spirit of the place, which Norberg-Schulz calls genius loci, giving an aura or presence to a particular environment which is composed of the total character of the things that make up a certain place. We may say that in the natural environment the supernatural extends itself into our consciousness through that presence we call the genius loci. Hence, man responds by constructing the spirit of his aspirations into the environment, so that his concrete awareness extends into an abstract dimension.² The expression of this dimension is evoked in me by the tower and the bridge. It is this quality that reveals a memorable energy to the place, that inscribes a poetic dimension in the DMZ between North and South Korea.



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2



3

- 1 Site Plan: Tower x Bridge
- 2 Site: Bridge
- 3 Plan & Section: Demilitarized Zone



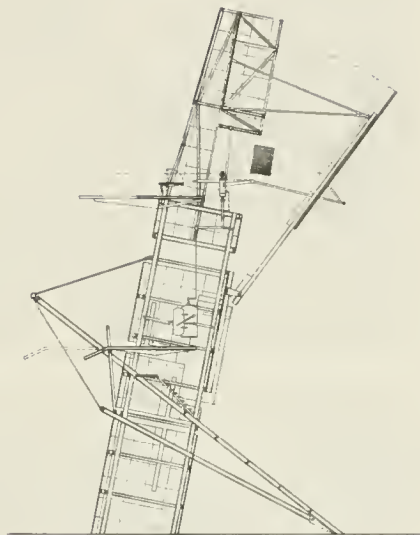
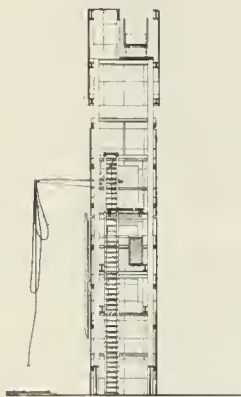
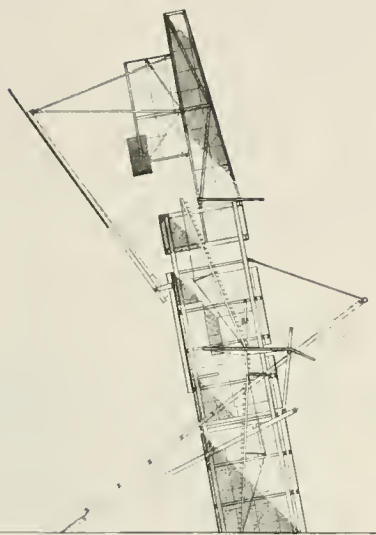
TOWER

The image of a locomotive obliterated into fragments uncovers the intent to disconnect the flow of military and civilian movements by cutting the circulation of the Korean Peninsula. The steam powered locomotive is an intimate remembrance for my grandfather; it was the link in his life between Seoul and Pyong-Yang before the conflict.

My grandfather is a writer, historian, poet, and philosopher finishing the last volumes of his Korean War Journals. His daily ritual consists of climbing the Namsam mountain in Seoul for inspiration before the day starts. Bachelard describes "how we inhabit and need a vital space, in accord with all the dialectics of life, how we take root, day after day, in a corner of our own world."³ My grandfather desperately searches for his corner of the world, a place that evokes imagination, memory, knowledge, and aspiration. According to Bachelard, a writer's description of a tower "illustrates the verticality of the human being...We all need to spend a romantic moment in the tower to be captivated by inspirations."⁴

The tower is embodied with the form and the geometric qualities of the destroyed locomotive. Meanwhile, the form and the literal function of the lighthouse is juxtaposed with the body of the tower. As one ascends the ladder, viewing frames slide through the walls to focus the viewer into specific orientation. The tower does not hinder vision, it strengthens it. In the tower, the viewer is not forbidden to see, the viewer is forced to see those significant views of the landscape. It is an all-seeing artifact providing a privileged position from which to view. The viewer is not only in a metaphorical position of potentially being blinded by the visual field, but his centrality is also rendered in the multiplication of his commanding position. At this moment one stops in silence and recollects the memories of the past.

All landscapes exist within frameworks – frameworks holding the forms and ideas that give shape and meaning to the landscape. The tower is a frame for the landscape, just as the landscape frames the tower. In composing a building within a landscape the significant idea is pictorial. Similarly, the architectural frame of a space captures a slice of reality as a picture. What is observed and how it is seen sets up a relationship between space and the object within that space, and this in turn creates a particular frame of reference.⁵ Erected on the severed railroad track, the tower is a place of aspiration for my grandfather. In this landscape tower is the window to its past and future reflecting hope.

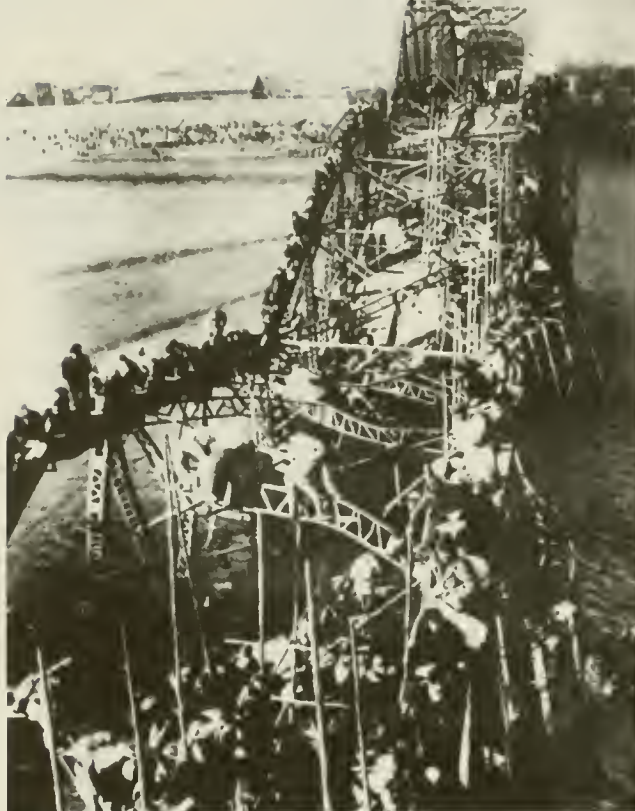


5

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- 4 Destroyed Train
- 5 Plans & Sections; Tower
- 6 Observation Chamber & Beacon Device



7



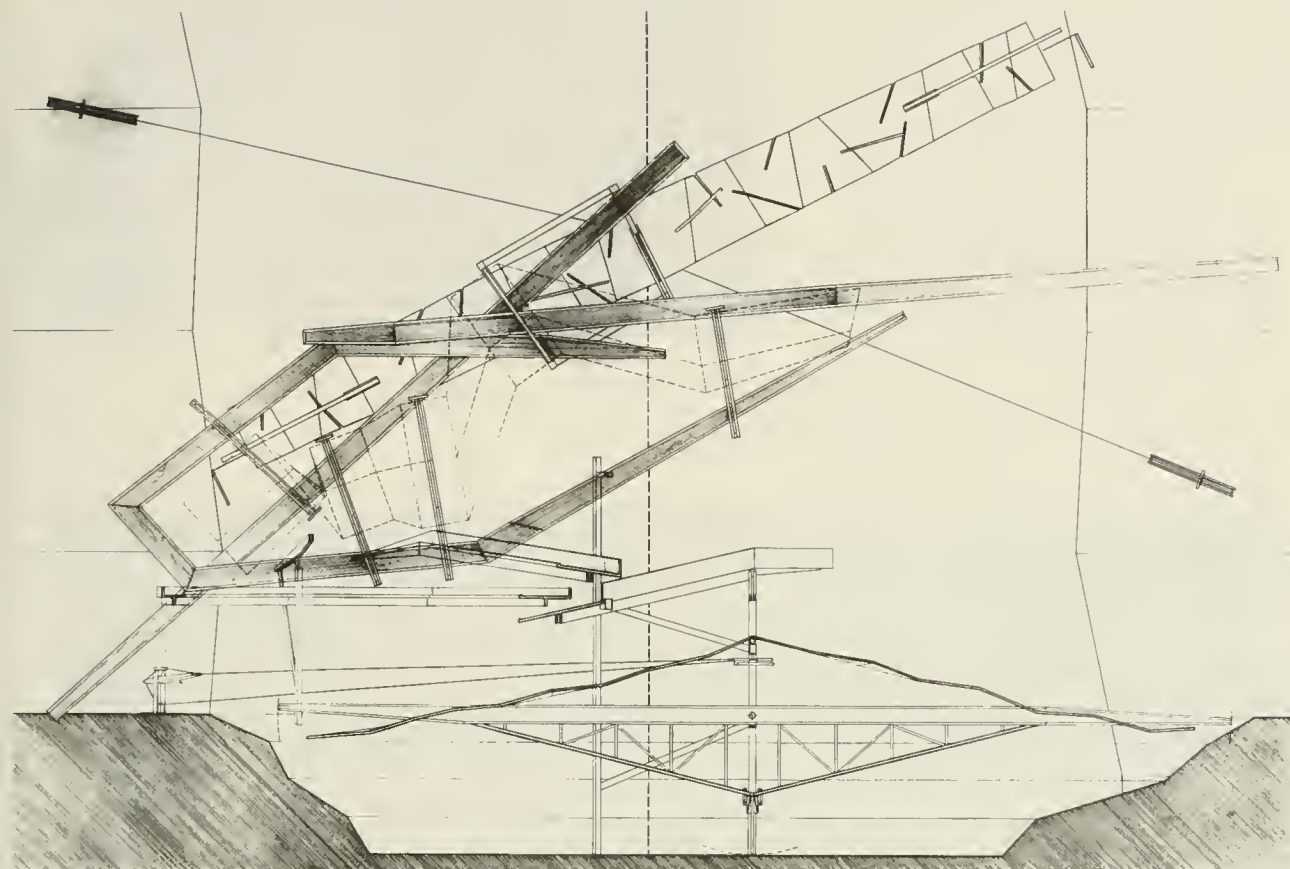
8

BRIDGE

In the winter of 1992, my father's recollection of his journey across the frozen peninsula as a child was triggered by our crossing of a steel structured bridge in Providence, Rhode Island. It was on this bridge that my father's memories unfolded. His account was of the determination of the immigrants who crossed over the obliterated bridges left only as fragmented structures. He remembered not one, but several bridges had to be crossed and for him this was the nightmare journey of death.

The bridge expands across the Sateen River between North and South Korea. There is no mail and no direct contact between the two Koreas. The only line of communication is through the Red Cross offices located in the truce village of Panmunjom. Three and a half million Koreans who used to live in the north are now living in the e south. First convened in 1972, the south and north Red Cross Conference was designed to reunite separated families. The bridge functions as the life line between North and South Korea. The pulley mechanism allows letters across a forbidden boundary. On can only push the chamber midway; from the other side another has to pull the chamber in. The life line cannot exist without the materialization of exigencies to emerge from the two sides. The visual passages suspended by the bridge give continuity in space and time, for they demonstrate the basic existential pattern of interaction between place and time: the continuum of what is, what was, and what could be. However, the physical journey on the bridge fractures space, path, boundary, and lines by obstructing the sequence of perception. It embodies appendages, adjacent structures, passages which cause the crosser to stop, even for a moment, to dwell in a suspended state.

The current political situation renders the bridge almost impossible to cross physically. However, the bridge is a monument of collective memory, a device that re-constructs the viewer's past by re-living the journey of death in the present. The bridge was conceived through a de materialization process, based on re-fabricating the historical investigation of the historical lines of demarcation. Different maps of Korea were produced: kingdoms, provinces, tax grids, geographic regions, military and population movements, natural and political boundaries. The overlapped maps uncovered imprints of forgotten landscapes of various moment in Korean history. This simultaneous reading produced new maps representing mesh, passages, ribbon, and structures. Hence the different layers of the abstract cartographic bridges are grafted on the Sachon River. The hope for peace and unification is in the heart of all Koreans, and this monumental object is perceived as an instrument for unification. The bridge also seeks to unify the internal conflict in Korean culture, the generation gaps between the war era and the redevelopment era. The bridge creates a reflective place resonating the collective memories that bond a culture in transition.



9



- 7 Crossing of destroyed bridge
- 8 The mesh structure projects multiple shadows which permutates its form onto the body of the bridge. This portrays the absurdity of the invisible boundaries imposed by the foreign powers on the Korean Peninsula.
- 9 Plan & Section: Bridge

MEMORIES: TOWER x BRIDGE

In visiting a place we sometimes become aware of an extraordinary atmosphere that we find difficult or impossible to describe in rational language: we are simply conscious of that place adding up to more than the sum of its parts. When we discover a place to be "memorable," it is the result of our position to remark upon that extra something.⁶ Architectures allow us to perceive not only their passive role as memories of cultural history, but also serve a significant function in our own consciousness of passing through time and space.⁷ Therefore, time is compressed into memorable images of space, generating an architecture of spatial consciousness.⁸

We experience architecture through changing perceptions of patterns created by solid and void, light and shade, which reveal forms in space as we move among them and change our position relative to them. Even our relations to earth, sky, fire, and water are the multiple ways of defining space and controlling light in relating materials and structure to all these elements. This establishes systems of order and disorder which are investigated and fabricated into architecture, which then can be employed imaginatively to awaken responses in those who experience it.⁹ It is this architecture, together with the imagery that we perceive in our surroundings, which presents and defines the architecture of memories.

Stanford Anderson concludes that realization of memory is a function of the present; it is a small step to an awareness of the potential for manipulation which lies in the construction of memory. The numerous, oppressive monuments of the repressive regimes of this century, and their selective restoration or destruction of monuments, provide ample evidence of architecture in the service of these manipulations. The importance of history as a critical enterprise which may undermine memories constructed for manipulation is clear. Or the opposite: precisely because memory is open to doubt, valid memories, too, are vulnerable to challenge, and thus needful of support through critical history.¹⁰ The tower and the bridge impel between the fragile realms of memory and history. Their endeavour lies in the ability to mediate the complex perceptions of these two realms. The tower is identified by the symbolic ritual within an individual. The bridge re-fabricates the official history by re-representing the forms of the historical views. The bridge is understood by the collective viewers as the memory of their past. The two works evoke flash backs which link to series of past memories and experiences. "The objective landmarks in the mediating identification and the intellectual synthesis...have themselves a temporal significance only because gradually, step by step, the synthesis of apprehension links me to my whole



actual past."¹¹ It is this window to memory that can reopen another view to history.

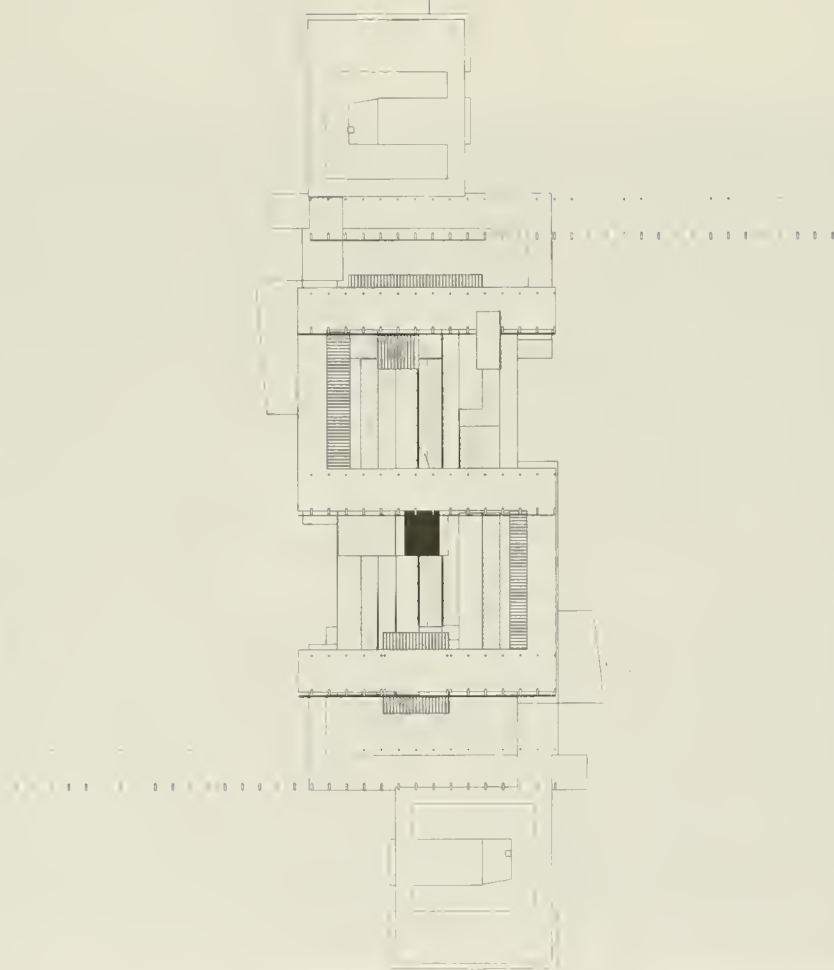
One can cross-examine the motives behind the constellations of the tower and the bridge. What dimension does memory and history negotiate with the architect and how does this investigation influence the architect? To define all these propositions one must engage in an act of reading, drawing, and writing. Through the act of making one discovers the virtue of one's own centrality. The site, program, and investigation allowed me a retrospective process: the production of the tower and the bridge was the vehicle to unlock my obscure identity and culture. In uncovering of the field of memory, a new trajectory of my future was calculated. "Our future is not made up exclusively of guess work and daydreams. Ahead of what I see and perceive, there is, it is true, nothing more actually visible, but my world is carried forward by lines of intentionality which trace out in advance at least the style of what is to come (although we are always on the watch, perhaps to the day of our death, for the appearance of something else."¹² Merleau-Ponty's sentiment accords with my axiom of intentionalities. This validates Bergson's theory to practice, "perception places us immediately within memory, where the present is determined by the past, and the past determines the future."¹³

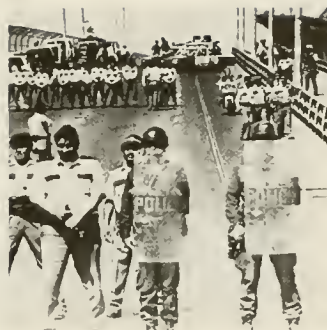
Sung Ho Kim, a current S.M.Arch.S. student at MIT, completed this thesis at the Rhode Island School of Design and the Architectural Association, London.

- 10 The mask becomes my body. Grafted from my head, it extends across and focuses on the context of the demilitarized zone, which extends the width of the Korean Peninsula.
- 11 The first lens indicates my distance from my heritage, while the second manifests the intimate relationship between me and my family's struggle. The lenses project my perception to give knowledge of the memories and aspirations of my family.

- 1 David H. Hockworth, "A War With No Winners," *Newsweek*, July 18, 1994.
- 2 Malcolm Quantrill, *The Environmental Memory*, (New York, 1987) p. 48.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 90.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 93.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 57.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 47.
- 9 Stanford Anderson, "Memory in Architecture," *Daidalos* 58, December, 1995.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- 11 Colin Smith, *Phenomenology of Perception* / M. Merleau-Ponty, (Routledge, 1962) p. 418.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 416.
- 13 Bernard Cache, *Earth Moves* (Boston, 1994) p. 144.







Mexico ... Space/Nation/Class ... US

Erik Chia-Kong Mar

With the much-commented upon shifts in the global economy and the problematizing of traditional social, economic, cultural, and political relationships, the role of architecture as a "public" practice has fallen under scrutiny. The "privatization of public space," resulting from the overt merging of "public" concerns (typically represented through the State) and "private" interests (in our society, usually defined by groups with significant power over investment decisions) is often taken as symptomatic of a general trend towards the breakdown of democracy itself. Here, however, it is important to differentiate between what can be termed the "public sphere," the abstract discursive arena where thought is (re)produced and debated, and "public space," the actual built spaces of personal encounter among strangers. Certainly, since the Enlightenment when the terms first acquired widespread currency, the latter has depended upon some conception of the former. Yet we remain far from a theoretical or philosophical consensus regarding exactly what constitutes the (necessarily re-formed) public sphere. It follows, then, that architecture, historically the medium of choice for the public expression of consensual social paradigms, is, as a profession, at a loss to define the conceptual parameters for an appropriate contemporary approach to public design.

This thesis, consisting of two components—a written text and an architectural design—draws on theoretical debates of the "public sphere" (assuming one still exists as such) in the definition of the issues to be addressed in the contemporary design of "public space". I have used a 1993 design competition co-sponsored by the AIAS and Graphisoft, Inc., entitled "Beyond the Border," as a vehicle for the architectural component of this investigation. The site, a proposed border crossing near El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, brings into play many of what I feel to be the central issues—the redefined role of the nation-state, the formation of community identity, difference, and class—to be addressed in a redefinition of the public sphere, with consequences for an architecture of public space.

Mexican police on the international bridge between El Paso and Ciudad Juárez during protests against Operation "Hold the Line" (9/1993)

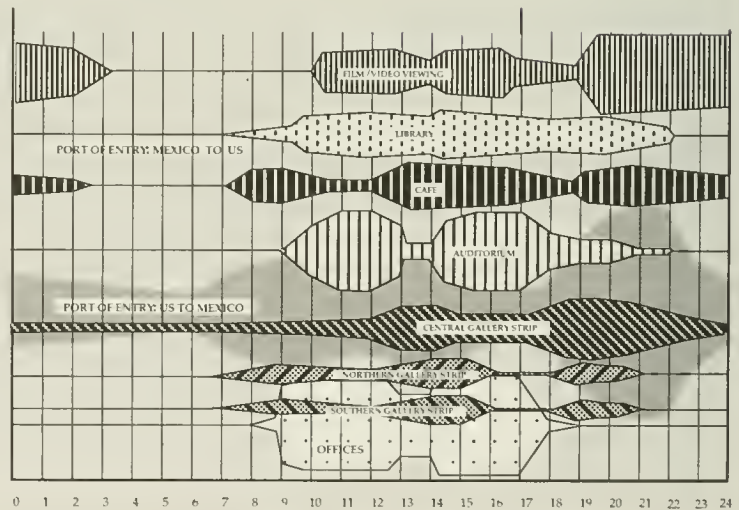
U.S. police on the international bridge between El Paso and Ciudad Juárez during protests against Operation "Hold the Line" (9/1993).

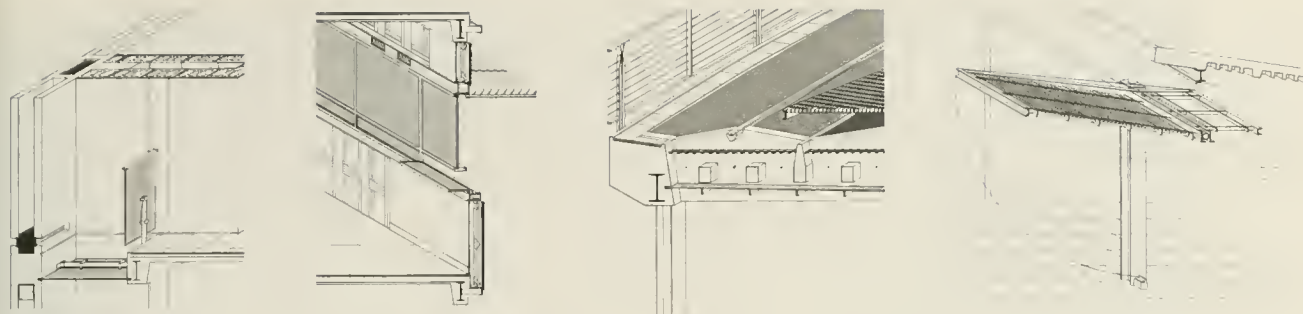


The border between Nagales, Sonoro and Nagales, Arizona, c. 1940.

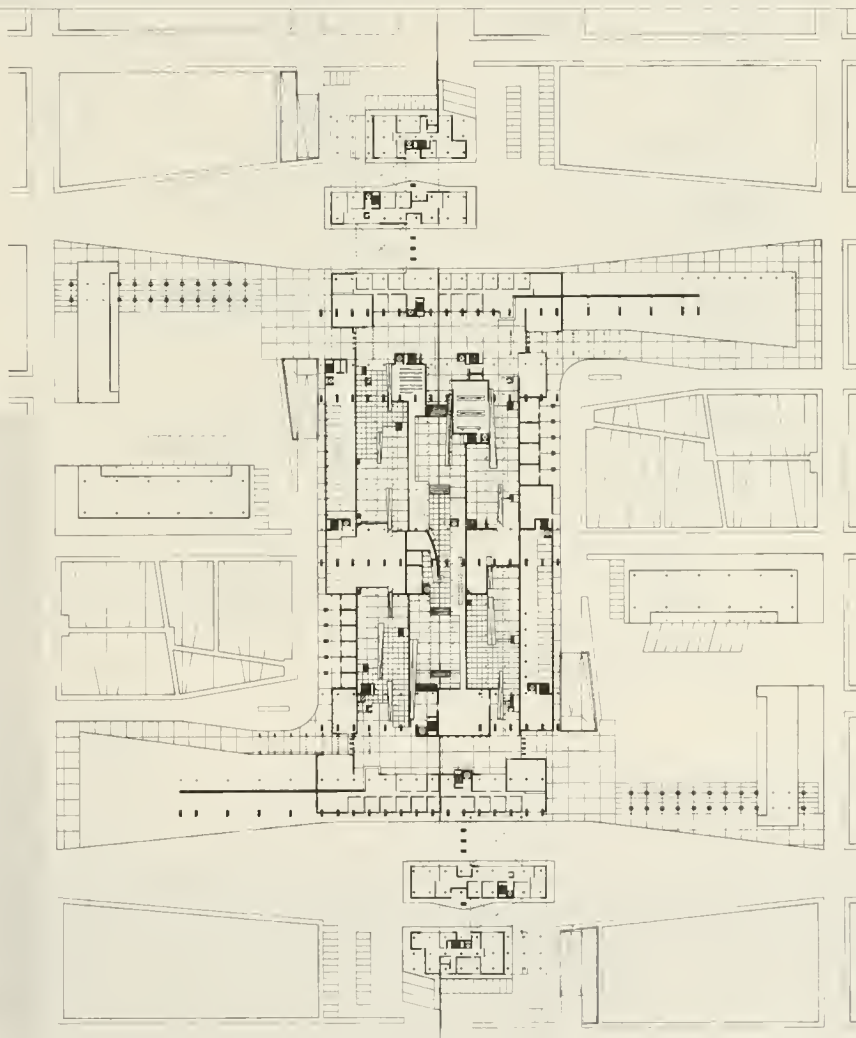
The end of the border at the Pacific Ocean.

“A boundary is not that at which something stops, but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its essential unfolding... spaces receive their essential being from locations and not from ‘space.’”¹





Given the aim of the overall scheme to problematize the national border at a macro level, the tectonic details of the building's assembly necessarily must problematize "borders" (understood, as before, as metaphors for psychic/social division) throughout the complex as a whole. That is, borders never disappear completely: there is no "end of history", no final resolution of contradiction and division. Just as identity and difference are read as processes continually in flux, continually contested at the level of community on the Mexican-US border, implying a constant shifting or displacement of its specific psychic location, so any architecture displaces and re-forms new borders within its very functioning.



The diagram to the left maps the intensity (measured simply in terms of quantity of users) of occupation of the various spaces contained within the complex over a typical 24-hour period. It shows the difference in the flows through the two immigration points, with the US-Mexico direction receiving heaviest use in the evening, while peak hours for the Mexico-US direction occur in the morning. Also differentiated are the occupation patterns of the gallery strips.

Pedestrian Space minimum 50,000 sq.ft. (4645 sq.m.) - maximum 100,000 sq.ft. (9290 sq.m.)
 30% landscaped area — 15,000 sq.ft. (1393 sq.m.); 15% rest room and related facilities — 7,500 sq.ft. (697 sq.m.); 15% storage and maintenance — 7,500 sq.ft. (697 sq.m.); 35% circulation — 17,500 sq.ft. (1625 sq.m.); 5% immigration and security (2—1 1/2% each side) — 2500 sq.ft. (232 sq.m.)

Auditorium 10,000 sq.ft. (929 sq.m.) total (added to pedestrian space requirements)
 75% seating — 7,500 sq.ft. (697 sq.m.); 25% support (bathrooms, storage, misc.) — 2,500 sq.ft. (232 sq.m.)

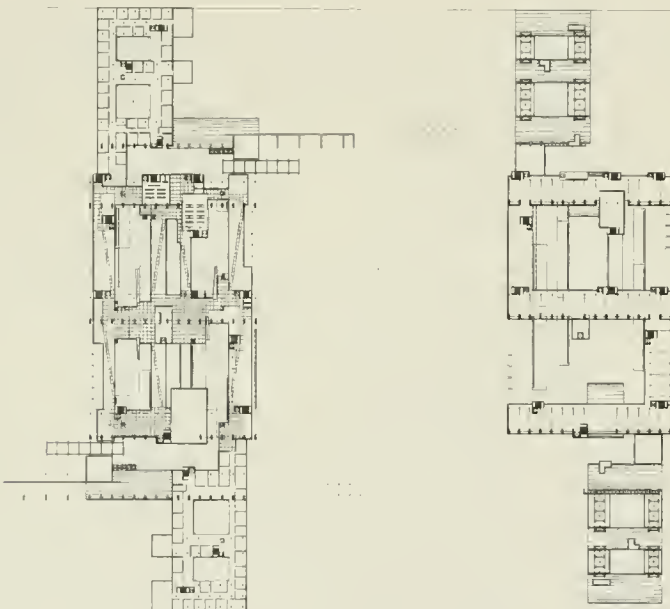
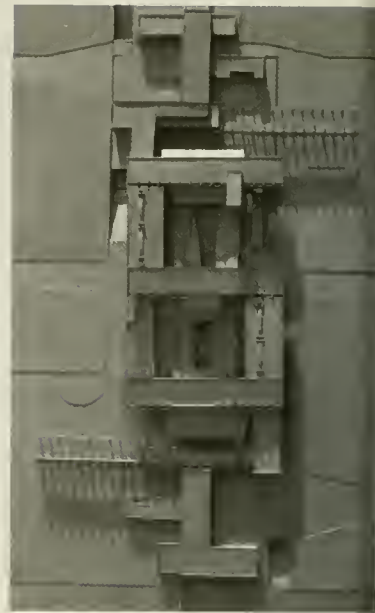
Education and Exhibit Space 50,000 sq.ft. (4645 sq.m.) total (added to pedestrian space requirements)
 40% gallery — 20,000 sq.ft. (1858 sq.m.) total (added to pedestrian space requirements); 50% education — 25,000 sq.ft. (2322 sq.m.); 10% support (bathrooms, storage, misc.) — 5,000 sq.ft. (464 sq.m.)

Private Offices (approximately 100) 50,000 sq.ft. (4645 sq.m.)
 50% office space — 25,000 sq.ft. (2322 sq.m.); 15% conference space — 7,500 sq.ft. (697 sq.m.); 15% administrative — 7,500 sq.ft. (697 sq.m.); 20% support (bathrooms, storage, misc.) — 10,000 sq.ft. (929 sq.m.)

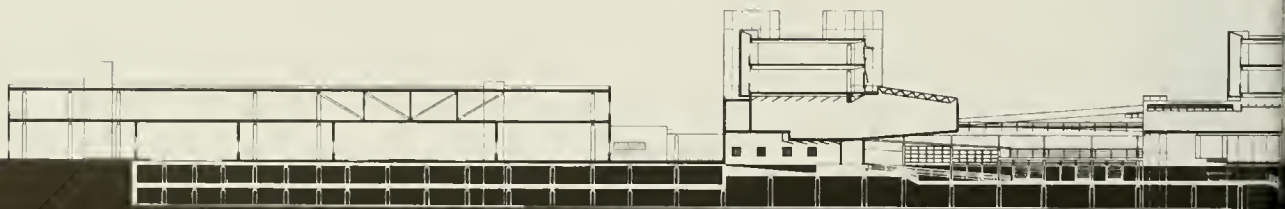
Government Offices (approximately 30) 15,000 sq.ft. (1393 sq.m.)
 50% office space — 7,500 sq.ft. (697 sq.m.); 15% conference space — 2,250 sq.ft. (209 sq.m.); 15% administrative — 2,250 sq.ft. (209 sq.m.); 20% support (bathrooms, storage, misc.) — 3,000 sq.ft. (288 sq.m.)

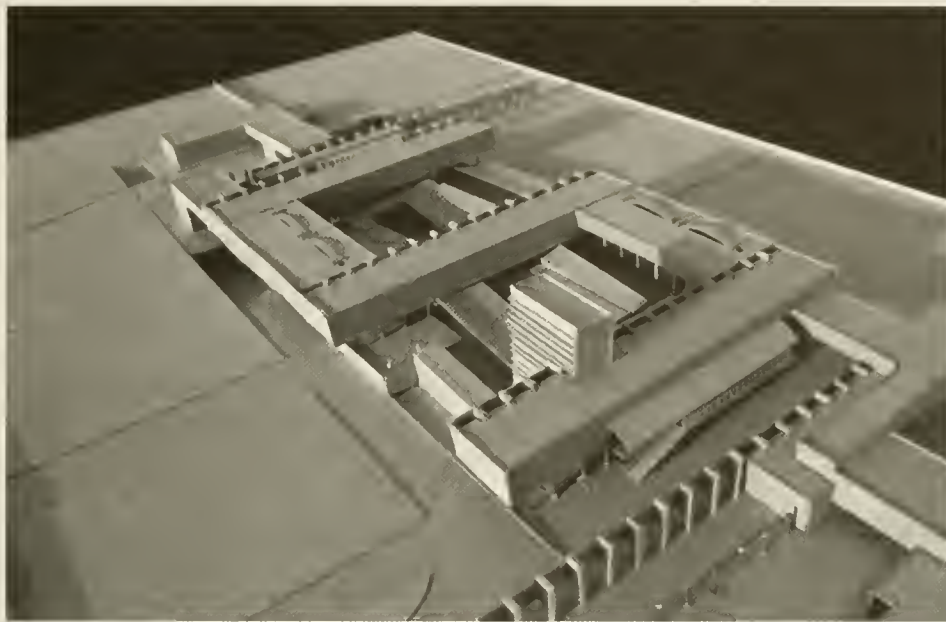
Parking (approximately 200 cars per side) 60,000 sq.ft. (5574 sq.m.) per side

Site Preparations The remainder of the site will be planned and landscaped for vehicular and pedestrian access, as well as for the enhancement of arrival and departure sequences.



The “border,” as a metaphor for social divisions in general, offers entry into the problem of public space/sphere. At borders, the construction of identity, and of difference, become manifest. The construction of an (imagined) Other so as to define the Self is not a linear process. It is, as Homi Bhabha says, “ambivalent”: it is the “simultaneous desiring and psychic disavowal” of the Other by the Self;² Bhabha also claims that, “the recognition and disavowal of ‘difference’ is always disturbed by the question of its re-presentation or construction,”³ presumably because a framed or explicit re-presentation





of their construction de-naturalizes the dichotomies between Self/Other and Identity/Difference. The US-Mexican border in particular presents an especially fertile case: not only a border between two nation-states, and therefore between two representatives of the last major place-based communities,⁴ but also a border between, at a larger scale, the so-called First and Third Worlds, or, between those nations that (primarily) supply raw materials and those that process the same materials in the international division of labor. Simultaneously, it is a temporal border between the evolution of two historical modes of pro-

duction: that of an economy based significantly on almost feudal agricultural production and that of one increasingly dominated by a technocratic class of managers of "symbolic capital". In their various interdependencies, the two sides of each of these dichotomies add up to more than the sum of their parts; in their contradictions, they fragment. As Heidegger recognizes in the statement above, the processes that occur at explicit psychological, social, cultural, and/or economic borders are the in the end the same ones that are played out in everyday life and that, to a significant degree, determine lived experience.

1. Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking."

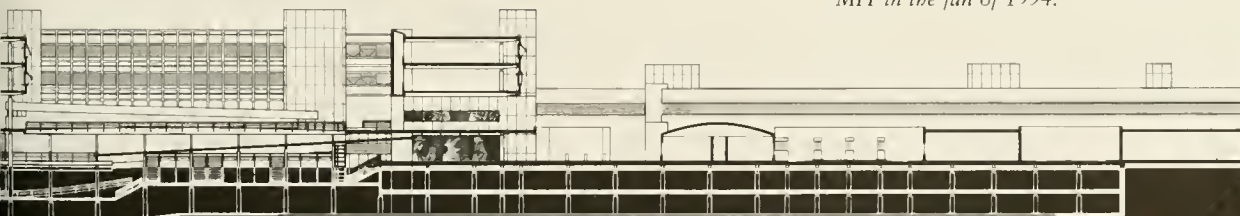
2. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 69.

3. Bhabha, (1994), p. 81.

4. My assertion here is that the nation-state in fact represents the last major example, under late capitalism, of community (that is, of Benedict Anderson's "horizontal comradeship") based on the traditional criteria of bounded, stable territory and the common interpretation of lived experience that derives from geographical proximity. While "communities" are continually being constituted in contemporary society, one could argue that the conditions for their formation have changed: certainly the term "place" has taken on a different meaning and can no longer be posed unproblematically as a strategy of "resistance".

5. Robert Reich, *The Work of Notions: Preparing ourselves for 21st Century Capitalism*, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1991).

Erik Mar completed this thesis as part of a Master of Architecture degree at MIT in the fall of 1994.



10 THRU 20

Voices from the Hague

Dennis Adams

10

On September 8, 1995, Richard Meier's new City Hall/Library complex officially opened in the Spui district of the Hague. Promoted as the symbolic forum of a new city center, "a public heart for the Hague," this massive urban monument, surfaced with Meier's signature gridded white cladding, is the largest completed project designed by this American architect. Representative of a new structuring of urban functions, this complex brings together under one roof both civic and commercial domains that include council chambers and offices, a central public library, and retail stores. The concept of its design was developed as a direct response to the given urban fabric that surrounds the site, absorbing and mediating its formal complexities and contradictions through both plan and section.

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At the center of this complex is a wedge shaped, glass roofed atrium of cathedral like proportions that is both the physical and symbolic matrix of the architecture. In fact, it is the largest covered plaza in Europe, a new scale of "public space" in which open staircases, exposed walkways and glass elevators traverse its dimensions and serve as stations for both viewing and being viewed. The subject of this volumetric display is nothing less than "visibility" itself, generated through the reflection of natural light off of its vast white interior surfaces. Both Meier and his supporters have made claim for this "visibility" in the strictest of modernist ideals: the postulation of a democratic space that belongs to everyone, a sign of openness in waiting for new and yet undefined community formations.

12

In the spring of 1995, I was invited by Lily van Hague of Stroom to develop a project in relation to the city. Located across the street from Meier's new City Hall, Stroom is considered a kind of laboratory where ideas about art in public spaces are tested. Artists are invited to produce public projects and/or develop installations for their exhibition space that specifically address the context of the Hague. During my first visit to the city, Meier's new building was in its final construction phase, scheduled to open in September of 1995. Models and drawings were on display at the city's information center and promotional brochures were being distributed at various locations. Even in its unfinished state, the sheer scale and whiteness of the building's shell had already stood defiantly as an invasive sign in the surrounding urban network. It was in response to this critical window of reception that accompanies new major works of architecture, that I decided to situate my intervention.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100.

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By my second trip at the end of September, the building had officially opened, and its full reception seemed to be the major topic of conversation throughout the city. During my first walk through the massive interior of the atrium, I was immediately struck by its built-in furnishings: 24 numbered registration stations that are used for various civic procedures, including immigrant registration, naturalization, voting registration, and so forth. These reception niches were designed by Meier as an extension of his stark white geometric scheme. Their structure consists of a long wooden counter, partitioned into individual transaction zones by numbered white rectangular modules. Each station can accommodate two related patrons situated across the counter from the receiving public official. The patrons chairs are black painted versions of the natural wooden chairs specifically selected for the public areas of the interior spaces. Both types exist throughout the building and are punctuated by an identical grid of four squares that Meier had cut into the back of each chair as a kind of logo for the building itself.

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What is startling about these registration stations' relationship to the atrium is their complete openness to public scrutiny. Both applicants and public officials are in full view and can be easily overheard by others waiting to use the stations as well as people just passing through the atrium. This paranoid aspect is compounded by the immense scale of the atrium which looms over the low and intimate elevation of the stations. Meier has promoted these open registration zones as a sign of democratic ideals. He resisted the use of bullet-proof glass, demanded by a number of the building advisory committees for control purposes, insisting on closing the distance between the public official, the patron and the casual passerby.

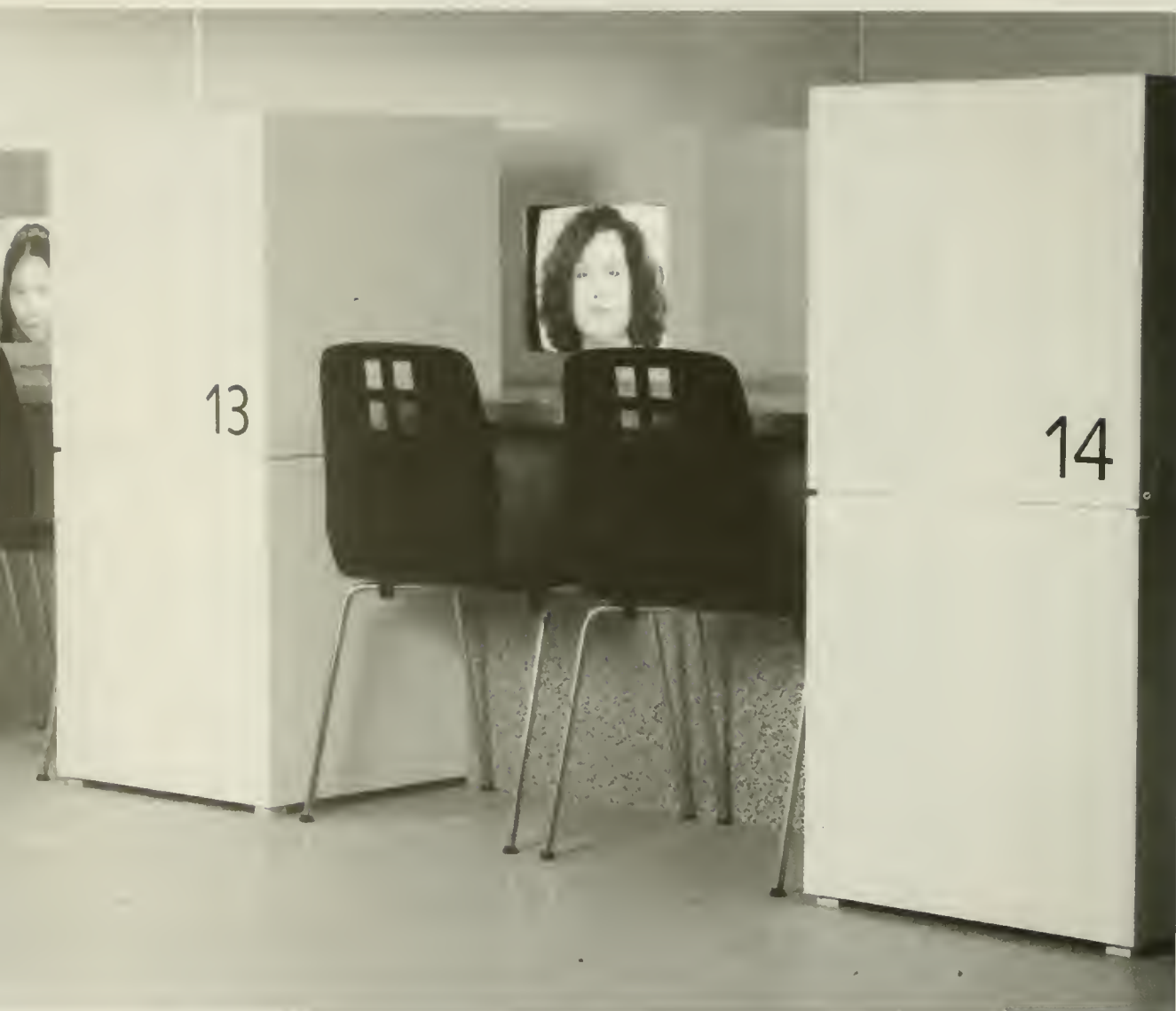
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For my project, 10 THRU 20, ten registration stations were reconstructed inside the exhibition space of Stroom. Every detail of Meier's design was carefully duplicated in its exact scale. It was my intention to dislodge these furnishings from their bureaucratic function, transforming them into a forum for recent immigrants to the Hague. To facilitate open discussion and potential dissent, a video monitor was built into the backside of each of the eleven numbered partitions that separate the registration stations. Each monitor displays the face of a recent immigrant speaking about the problematic of his or her transition to the Hague. These monitors face away from the audience. They can be viewed only through their reflection in a mirrored wall that delineates the rear boundary of the installation, displacing the space that the public official would normally occupy on the other side of the registration counter. It is congruent with the marginal status of immigrants that their images were positioned between the registration stations, literally in the margins of these official public furnishings. "Marginality" is here demonstrated as a position of critical perception, mediated through the use of the mirror.

16

Only immigrants between the ages of 25 and 35 that had work experience in both their country of origin and the Hague were selected to speak. Individuals that immigrated directly from their parents' home were not included. It was important for their critical facility that they had been economically independent in both their country of origin and the Hague. The video sessions were shot over a 30 minute time frame. I asked each person to speak approximately five minutes and the rest of the time they were to remain silent. They were cued when to speak, but were allowed to finish their story within its natural time frame. They were to talk about their cultural identity, problems of adjustment, and their lives in the Hague. Their stories were completely their own and were unrehearsed and undirected. Each person was alone in the room with the camera, without even a technician present.







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In the wake of the installation's presence, what these immigrants had to say was perhaps not as important as their opportunity to say it. And then, there was a long, limitless silence that became the real subject of the tapes. Immigrants are conventionally silenced both by their language disability and their prejudicial reception by the native population. Obviously, it was important to give these immigrants the opportunity to speak, but what became more interesting was the possibility that the magnification of this silence might be reconstituted as a psychological weapon of dissent. At any one time, anywhere from one to five people would be talking while the rest of the eleven were silent. So there was a perception that they had become each other's audience.

There were some who felt that 10 THRU 20 would have been more effective as an intervention situated directly inside Meier's Atrium. On a political level a good case can be made for it. However, I chose to reconstruct the registration counters inside the Stroom exhibition space, so they could connect through memory rather than direct comparison. They are clearly excerpted, not displaced, like a quote stolen from its context. They function as an image and not as a mistaken identity. This isolation allows for a more concentrated reading of a particular detail of public space. A one-to-one relationship is set up between the viewer and the object. There is the possibility of being alone with this public furniture, perhaps seeing it for the first time, and meditating on the implications of its architecture by examining its reconfigured elements outside of the complexity of their original context.

As an extension of this shift from the atrium to the gallery space of the Stroom, there was a demonstrated equivalence between the two geometric white spaces. They share the same modernist vocabulary. For some of my audience it was shocking to see how well Meier's furnishings adapted to their new context. Ironically, even the white columns of the exhibition space echoed Meier's own.

Compounded with their decontextualization from the atrium, the interfacing of the video portraits with Meier's registration stations seemed to connote an off-stage presence. Both the addition of the mirrored wall and the allusion to side-bar lighting created by the placement of the video monitors in the margins of each transaction niche gave the visual impression of a row of theatrical make-up vanities. Typically these furnishings are found backstage and represent a station between the private world of the performer and his or her public persona. They mark the existential boundary of masquerade, as sites where public faces are applied and removed. With its brightly illuminated performative arena and seating, the make-up vanity simulates the theater itself in condensed scale. The time and space between action and reaction, performer and audience is short-circuited, compressed into a single reflected image on mirrored glass. Structurally, it would seem that these furnishings occupy the zones of prologue and epilogue, but their relationship to narrative is more fractured and disturbed. Nothing is introduced, no conclusions drawn. Rather, they are platforms for continual rehearsals and recountings, where self-doubt secures itself as the very subject of public transaction.

This text began as an interview with Hans Oerlemans, entitled "The Other American" and was published in 10 THRU 20, a catalogue that accompanied the exhibition of the same name at Stroom HCBK in the Hague, 1995/96. Dennis Adams is a practicing artist and Associate Professor of Visual Studies at MIT.





Postcards from the Periphery

Andrew Herscher

For one week at the end of this summer, I moved through the center of Prague with a portable kiosk. This kiosk displayed postcards I had made of Prague's urban periphery, a territory defined by large tracts of identical or almost-identical prefabricated housing blocks. I tried to distribute these postcards to anyone I could — confused tourists, enthusiastic teenagers, disgusted friends of Old Prague, and so on.

The postcard is an archetypal means of urban representation, a means which is typically utilized in order to display the city as an object of desire. While I admit to a fascination with Prague's periphery, its vast open spaces prompting feelings of vertiginous freedom as well as unease and alienation, I hoped only to frame this periphery as an other object, an object which could inspire in the spectator a variety of responses, from curiosity and fascination to melancholy and dismay.

My movement through Prague followed the ancient Royal Road, once the passage which Czech rulers took from the heart of the Old City to Prague Castle, and today Prague's prime sequence of touristic sites and services. Along the Royal Route, postcards from the periphery infiltrated Prague's core, a cityscape of beautifully-reconstructed historic buildings housing souvenir shops, money changing outlets, overpriced cafes, and fast food restaurants. Through this confrontation of center and periphery, of scene and obscene, I tried to transform the visibility of Prague, or, in other words, to problematize the existing division of the city into visible and invisible realms. According to this division, Prague's historic core is celebrated — but at the cost of repressing the existence of the city's bleak periphery.

I rarely gave away a postcard without a conversation, an explanation of what I was trying to do; indeed, this explanation seemed to be just as interesting to my audience as my merchandise. I gave the postcards away for free, however, because these conversations about the periphery seemed to be the best payment I could receive. Now I like to imagine these postcards from the periphery in motion, travelling unpredictable trajectories towards various destinations, near and far from Prague. Perhaps each time one of these postcards is received, the image of Prague — however ironically or trivially — is somehow re-evaluated.







MĚSTSKÉ OBSCENNOSTI

PRAHA JE TEMĚŘ VŽDY REPREZENTOVÁNA SVÝM HISTORICKÝM JADREM. JEHO ZOBRAZENÍ ZANECHÁVAJÍ OHROMNÉ PRAŽSKÉ PERIFÉRIE NESPATŘITELNÉ. TYTO PERIFÉRIE ZAHŔNUJÍ NEJČASTĚJI SÍDLIŠTĚ STEJNYCH NEBO TEMĚŘ STEJNYCH PREFABRIKOVANÝCH PANELÁKŮ. POKUD JSOU TYTO OBLASTI DOMOVEM PRO TŘETINU PRAŽSKÝCH OBYVATEL, POKUD SE V NICH ODEHRÁVALA VĚTŠINA REALIZACÍ POVÁLEČNEHO MĚSTSKÉHO STAVITELSTVÍ A POKUD JSOU TAKÉ OKRAJEM NEJUTOPIČTĚJŠÍCH SCHEMAT NEZIVALEČNÉ ČESNÉ AVANTGARDY, PAK JE LZE CHAPAT JAKO NEREPREZENTATIVNÍ URBANNÍ PRVAT, JAKO JISTÉ MĚSTSKÉ OBSCENNOSTI. TENTO PŘÍSTUP K POROZUMĚNÍ PERIFÉRIÍM OVLIVŇUJE NEJEN NAVŠTĚVNÍKŮV PROŽITEK MĚSTA, ALE TAKÉ ZKUŠENOST JENO VLASTNÍCH OBYVATEL.

TENTO PROJEKT SI PŘISVOJUJE JEDEN Z PROSTŘEDKŮ URBANNÍCH ZOBRAZENÍ A "POSKVRŇUJE" MNOHO REPREZENTATIVNÍCH MÍST, ABY PROMĚNIL VNÍMÁNÍ MĚSTA. TÍMTO ZPŮSOBEM CHCE PROJEKT ZPROBLEMATIZOVAT EXISTUJÍCÍ ROZDĚLENÍ MĚSTA NA VÍDITELNÁ A NEVÍDITELNÁ ÚZEMÍ. ZATÍMCO JSOU VÍDITELNÁ ÚZEMÍ OSLOVOVÁNA, JSOU NEVÍDITELNÁ ÚZEMÍ NA JEJICH ÚKOR POTLAČOVÁNA.

PROBLEMATIZOVAT ROZDĚLENÍ ZNAMENÁ V TOMTO PROJEKTU VYTVÁŘET A ROZŠÍŘOVAT NOVA ZOBRAZENÍ PRAHY. TATO NOVA ZOBRAZENÍ NEZACHYCUJÍ HISTORICKÉ CENTRUM MĚSTA, ALE SPÍŠE OBSCENNÍ MĚSTSKÉ PERIFÉRIE. V POODBĚ POKHLONIC JSOU OBRAZY PERIFÉRIE NABÍZENY A PROJEKCI V PŘENOSNÉM KIOSKU, KTERÝ SE POKHYBUJE STŘEDEM MĚSTA. KIOSK SE POKHYBUJE NA KRALOVSKÉ CESTĚ, KTERÁ BYLA KOYSI PRO

URBAN OBSCENITIES

PRAGUE IS VIRTUALLY ALWAYS REPRESENTED BY ITS HISTORIC CENTRAL CORE. THESE REPRESENTATIONS LEAVE THE CITY'S ENORMOUS PERIPHERY INVISIBLE. THIS PERIPHERY IS LARGELY COMPOSED OF HOUSING ESTATES OF IDENTICAL OR ALMOST-IDENTICAL PREFABRICATED APARTMENT BLOCKS. WHILE THIS TERRITORY IS HOME TO AROUND ONE-THIRD OF PRAGUE'S INHABITANTS, WHILE IT IS THE SITE OF ALMOST ALL OF THE CITY'S POST-WORLD WAR TWO BUILDING ACTIVITY, AND WHILE IT IS THE LEGACY OF THE MOST UTOPIC SCHEMES OF THE INTER-WAR CZECH ARCHITECTURAL AVANT-GARDE, IT IS UNDERSTOOD AS AN UNREPRESENTATIONAL URBAN ELEMENT, AS AN URBAN OBSCENITY. THIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE PERIPHERY CONDITIONS NOT ONLY A VISITOR'S EXPERIENCE OF THE CITY, BUT ALSO THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CITY'S OWN INHABITANTS.

THIS PROJECT APPROPRIATES ONE OF THE CITY'S REPRESENTATIONAL DEVICES, AND CONTAMINATES MANY OF ITS REPRESENTATIVE SITES, IN ORDER TO TRANSFORM THE VISIBILITY OF THE CITY. IN SO DOING, THE PROJECT AIMS TO PROBLEMATIZE THE EXISTING DIVISION OF THE CITY INTO VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE TERRITORIES, A DIVISION WHICH CELEBRATES THE FORMER AT THE COST OF REPRESSING THE LATTER.

THIS PROBLEMATIZATION IS EFFECTED BY PRODUCING AND DISTRIBUTING NEW REPRESENTATIONS OF PRAGUE. THESE NEW REPRESENTATIONS PORTRAY NOT THE HISTORIC CITY CENTER, BUT RATHER, THE OBSCENE URBAN PERIPHERY. IN THE FORM OF POSTCARDS, IMAGES OF THE PERIPHERY ARE OFFERED FOR SALE FROM A PORTABLE KIOSK WHICH MOVES THROUGH THE CENTER OF PRAGUE.



THE KIOSK'S MOVEMENT TAKES PLACE ALONG THE "ROYAL ROUTE", ONCE THE PASSAGE WHICH CZECH RULERS TOOK FROM THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY TO PRAGUE CASTLE, AND TODAY PRAGUE'S PRIME SEQUENCE OF TOURISTIC SITES AND SERVICES. ALONG THE ROYAL ROUTE, IMAGES OF THE PERIPHERY CONFRONT AND MINGLE WITH IMAGES OF THE CITY CENTER. IT IS NOT INTENDED TO FRAME THE PERIPHERY AS AN OBJECT OF DESIRE, AS POSTCARDS OF THE CITY CENTER DO, BUT AS AN OTHER OBJECT, AN OBJECT WHICH CAN INSPIRE IN THE SPECTATOR AN INDETERMINATE VARIETY OF RESPONSES, FROM CURIOSITY AND FASCINATION TO MELANCHOLY AND DISMAY.

AT VARIOUS TIMES IN THE HISTORY OF PRAGUE'S HOUSING ESTATES, EFFORTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO "HUMANIZE" OR "BEAUTIFY" WHAT ARE GENERALLY RECOGNIZED TO BE GRIM AND BANAL ENVIRONMENTS. THESE EFFORTS HAVE TENDED TO IMPOSE VARIOUS "POSITIVE" FORMS OR OBJECTS ON THE HOUSING ESTATES'S TOPOGRAPHY — PLAYGROUNDS, PUBLIC SCULPTURES, BRIGHTLY-PAINTED FACADES, AND SO ON. SUCH IMPOSITIONS, HOWEVER, HAVE BEEN DOOMED TO FAILURE; THEY CANNOT BEGIN TO ADDRESS THE COMPLEX SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DYNAMICS THAT THE HOUSING ESTATES BOTH REPRESENT AND PERPETUATE.

THIS PROJECT SUGGESTS AN ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY; INSTEAD OF IMPOSING INAPPROPRIATE ARCHITECTURAL FORMS ON THE PROBLEMATIC TERRAIN OF THE PERIPHERY, THE PERIPHERY IS SIMPLY EXPOSED AS A SITE, A SITE WHICH IS JUST AS AUTHENTIC AND JUST AS CHARACTERISTIC OF PRAGUE AS ANY OF THE CITY'S MOST PICTURESQUE MEDIEVAL NOOKS AND CRANNIES. WITH THIS (IRONIC AND TRIVIAL) EXPOSURE OF PRAGUE'S URBAN OBSCENITY, PERHAPS NEW REPRESENTATIONS OF THE CITY CAN BEGIN TO BE CONSTITUTED.

ANDREW HERSCHER

ČESKÉ PÁNOVNÍKY HLAVNÍ SPOJNICI MEZI STARÝM MĚSTEM A PRAŽSKÝM HRADEM A KTERÁ JE V SOUČASNÉ PRAZE HLAVNÍM MÍSTEM TURISTICKÉHO RUCHU. PODÉL KRALOVSKÉ CESTY SE OBRAZY PERIFÉRIE KONFRONTUJÍ A PROLINAJÍ S OBRAZY MĚSTSKÉHO CENTRA. ZAMĚREM PROJEKTU NENÍ ZARÁMOVAT PERIFERII JAKO OBJEKT TOUHY, JAK TO ČINÍ POHLEDNICE HISTORICKÉ PRAHY, ALE POJMOUT JI JAKO ODLIŠNÝ OBJEKT, KTERÝ MŮŽE OIVAKA INSPIROVAT K MNOHA RŮZNÝM REAKCÍM, POČÍNÁJE ZVĚDAVOSTÍ A FASCINACÍ A KONČE MELANCHOLIÍ A OBAVOU.

V RŮZNÝCH DOBÁCH HISTORIE PRAŽSKÝCH SÍLIŠŤ SE OBJEVOVALY SNAHY "HUMANIZOVAT" NEBO "ZNRÁŠĽOVAT" TO, CO JE OBECNĚ VNÍMÁNO JAKO NEMILOSRONÉ A BANALNÍ PROSTŘEDÍ. TYTO SNAHY CHTĚLY DO SÍLIŠŤOVÉ TOPOGRAFIE PŘINEST RŮZNÉ "POZITIVNÍ" TVARY NEBO OBJEKTY: HRÁŠTĚ, VEŘEJNÉ SOCHY, ZAŘÍVĚ NATŘENÉ FASÁDY ATO. TAKOVÉTO ZÁSANY BYLY OVŠEM ODSOUDŽENY K NEÚSPĚCHU, PROTOŽE SE NEZABÝVALY KOMPLEXNÍ SOCIÁLNÍ A POLITICKOU DYNAMIKOU, KTEROU SÍLIŠŤE PŘEDSTAVUJÍ A ROZVÍJEJÍ.

TENTO PROJEKT NAVRHUJE ALTERNATIVNÍ STRATEGII. NAMÍSTO UPLATŇOVÁNÍ NEVÝHOONÝCH ARCHITEKTONICKÝCH TVARŮ NA PROBLEMATICKÉM ÚZEMÍ PERIFÉRIE JE PERIFÉRIE JEJEDNOUŠE UKAZOVÁNA, JAKO MÍSTO, KTERÉ JE NEMENĚ AUTENTICKÝM MÍSTEM NEŽ TY NEJPITORESKNĚJŠÍ STŘEDOVĚKÉ PORTÁLKY A ZAKOUTÍ. S TOUTO (IRONICKOU A TRIVIALNÍ) UKÁZKOU PRAŽSKÝCH MĚSTSKÝCH OBSCENOSTÍ SE MOŽNA MOHOU OTEVŘÍT I NOVÉ ZPŮSOBY ZOBRAZENÍ MĚSTA.

ANDREW HERSCHER



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Urban Obscenities

Martina Pachmanová

Tourism is necessarily connected to the practices of visibility: seeing, being seen, sight-seeing and voyeurism. At the same time, however, it is not only the human eye which plays an important role in the realm of tourism; it is also the eye of the camera, a mechanical "elongation" of the human sense of sight which establishes the very essence of tourism, and which transforms immaterial experiences into

the material object. It is quite significant, then, that the beginnings of mass tourism are historically related to the beginnings of photography, and that both of them replaced, in a certain way, a previous means of colonialism by a much more sophisticated method of appropriation, that of a visual/virtual ownership. This appropriation is activated by the use of the camera producing pictures for family photo-albums as





well as images for beautiful and expensive guide-books.

What kind of places does the tourist's eye usually look at? Following the recommended routes described in *Michelin*, *Marco Polo*, *Let's Go*, and hundreds of other guides, the tourist's eye is prepared to consume the very sites whose pictures are reproduced on the pages of published guide-books, and which s/he knows before s/he actually attends them in reality. The touristic sites accord with a generally-accepted notion of historical value and beauty. The sites which are worth seeing are produced, advertised, and consumed, and a great part of the strategy of value-affirmation is played by postcards. Postcards which are cheap to possess, easy to mail, small enough to save; postcards whose images are perhaps a little bit kitschy (but, let's be honest, who of us can shoot a more realistic snap?), but which have that wonderful touch of nostalgia and a power to bring back past experiences. And it really does

not matter that they recall the memory of a countless number of other tourists who spared their change for the very same souvenir.

Andrew Herscher entered the beautiful Prague scenery, with its touristic network of historical sites, distributing a set of postcards with a light touch of an old-fashioned sepia color. These postcards were photographed in the grayish, unfriendly periphery of the capital city. To address the city's visitors, Herscher used a means of mass reproduction which is used in many other places. However, on the crowded street full of hungry tourists wanting to buy and own something authentic, the strikingly ugly effigies played a rather subversive role. The postcard became a way of re-reading and re-examining history, visuality, culture and identity; Herscher used the hidden contextual qualities of a mass produced picture, and, perhaps unconsciously, thus followed the Benjaminian legacy of mechanical reproduction's critical use.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, Prague has become a metropolis for tourism; this means, in real terms, that the character of the city has changed radically. Prague was transformed, like many other previously undiscovered touristic "treasures," into a spectacle of images. The Prague periphery, however, stayed hidden to the gaze of spectators. To see the historical city center with its numerous layers of decorative accessories is to see the city in elegant clothes; to see the periphery with its rough panel-walls of "rabbit hutch" apartment houses is to see the city stripped of its clothes. The Prague periphery depicted on the postcards of Andrew Herscher became a territory of nakedness, a territory of obscenity.

In his public art project, Herscher focused on those places which tourists see only before landing at the airport as a form of abstract geometric structures. Compared to the petrified beauty of the old districts, these places are considered by a majority of Prague citizens as a



disgrace to the city which insults good taste, no matter that more than one-third of the city inhabitants dwell there. In contrast to the rapidly-developing infrastructure in the center, the broad areas of the prefabricated blocks of flats do not receive a great deal of attention and investment, which is an opinion shared by most institutions, including the municipality. A view of the anonymous suburban boxes becomes a view of the obscene.

It was not only Andrew Herscher who recognized and titled the urban periphery as obscene; it was also the onlookers who, in the course of the artist's five-day nomadic movement along the Royal Route, reflected the anti-touristic images and contributed to a notion of urban obscenities in many ways. It was tourists who mostly did not understand either the provenance or the meaning of the postcards; it was Prague citizens living outside of the periphery who mostly made fun of the obscure visions which constitute the very life conditions of others;

and finally, it was the periphery dwellers themselves who expressed their anger, sadness, and depression, and who mostly rejected to receive from the artist any of the eleven postcards, being scared of finding themselves within these haunted appearances. In all of these reactions, there was an unconscious sense of obscenity (i.e. something unknown and prohibited, something undesired and at the same time tempting that can be—at least illusively—subordinated and controlled by a loud and cynical laugh, and, last but not least, something so known and familiar that is felt as part of one's mind and body, as a ghost of one's intimacy, and must be, therefore, veiled to the public view) which related them together.

During the socialist period in the former Czechoslovakia, photos of suburban prefabricated housing estates appeared on many postcards as a sign of progress, as a document of realizing the utopic visions of modern urbanism, and, of course, as

a confirmation of the regime's power. During the last couple of years, these images of the past were successfully effaced by a boom of new images announcing the arrival of the free-market economy, society, and culture. However, the models and objects of the previous icons of reproduction—including the uniformed, i.e. classless, concrete peripheries—still constitute people's lives. From this point of view, using a mind-provoking strategy on the border between art and sociology, Herscher's project became a way of re-thinking both the past and the present, and, thus, also a search for re-thinking people's identity. Addressing random pedestrians on the street, the artist initiated a communication which was to challenge the complex nature of identity, in cultural, sociological, and psychological senses. In the context of contemporary Czech society, which has been looking for its new "face" during the last seven years, the subtle set of postcards of Prague's periphery functioned as a

mirror. It broke an illusionary, self-satisfying, and stereotypical image of Czech identity as a result of both an economic miracle and a breathtakingly beautiful history, and, instead of a young and fresh face, showed a face with wrinkles and scars.

However unattractive and ugly this face is, its appearance on the public contributed to a badly-needed discussion about the future of the Prague periphery. However modest and into-the-crowd-dissolving the project of Urban Obscenities was, it helped to turn the eyes from the self-promoting speed-vehicle of tourism to the ponderous and heavy locomotive. On the edge of Czech culture whose activation through "public art" is still rather undiscovered, Herscher relocated the meaning from the center to the periphery, and thus dismantled a cliché of touristic vision. The few recent trials to intervene in the concrete Prague suburbs were, more or less, held on the level of local communities, and, perhaps for a



feeling of shame to unveil obscene conditions to the wide public, were never discussed outside of the periphery. Maybe, it must have been a foreign artist who, not having any prejudices, could efface a rigid border-line between the polarities of private and public, and tried to help us (Czechs) to get rid of illusions, and to understand ourselves a little bit better.

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"Up and Up" Melville on the Edge

William C. MacKay

for Maureen

Nearing the Venetian lagoon by rail, Herman Melville could think only of the swamps of Back Bay. "At 2 P.M. took cars for Venice," he scribbled in his journal. "Raining hard. Comfortable cars.—Level country. Approaching Venice like approaching Boston from the West." [p. 117]

Always he searched for the familiar inscribed in the strange. Turin reminded him of Philadelphia, Naples evoked images of New York: "Dined & walked for an hour in Strada di Toledo. Great crowds. Could hardly tell it from Broadway. Thought I was there." [p. 102] On Mount Pagus, near Smyrna, he found a remote house of worship: "An old ruinous mosque within. A Boston name written there." [p. 69]

In the Fall of 1856, Herman Melville was thirty-seven, the father of four, and at the end of several tethers. His finances were a shambles. In debt to family, friends, even

his publisher, he had failed in successive attempts to support himself as a novelist, a farmer, and a short story writer. A fire at Harper & Brother had undermined even his backlist potential. "He has lost his prestige," friend G. W. Curtis admitted.

Physically, emotionally, the situation was even worse. Whether called neuralgic complaints, rheumatism of the back, or bad eyes and general incapacity, Melville's condition had deteriorated drastically. Family letters carried guarded, perhaps coded allusions to Herman's "severe nervous affections" and "ugly attacks." "He has been advised strongly to break off the labor for some time & take a voyage or a journey & endeavor to recuperate," his father-in-law wrote. As if to underline the family resolve, Justice Lemuel Shaw advanced Melville "fourteen or fifteen hundred dollars" to finance his solitary seven month trip.



Rehabilitation, not writing, was the purpose of the journey. It might be argued plausibly that he packed a notebook only for its old London addresses rather than its empty pages. In any case, the red leather volume remained essentially untouched until he reached Edinburgh.

THE JOURNAL

Melville's books are action paintings, jittery registers of interactive discontents of genre and meaning. *Midtrip Pierre* jumps its tracks, *The Confidence Man* is a seismic medley of shuttles; even Moby Dick burrows out of itself.

The 1856-1857 *Journal* is no different. It begins as an absence; titleless, silent on the transatlantic passage, tersely uncommunicative about his Great Author encounters. Hawthorne's notebook devotes pages outlining their joint excursions and rhapsodizing over Melville's nihilism ("he had 'pretty much made up his mind to be annihilated'"). Melville reduces the philosophical exchange to a gnomic "Good talk" and ignores the day junkets altogether.

But two months into the tour, the entries surge. On December 2nd, the ship carrying Melville anchored at Syra, obliging the retired travel author to once again confront the implications of other cultures. At

first, foreignness seems almost a charade: "*Take all the actors of operas in a night from the theaters of London, & set them to work in their fancy dresses, weighing bales, counting cod-fish, sitting at tables on the dock, smoking, talking, sauntering, - sitting in boats & c- picking up rags, carrying water casks, bemired & c- will give some notion of Greek port. Picturesqueness of the whole.*" [p. 53]

But picturesqueness, the staple of nineteenth century travel writers, is for Melville only a starting-point. Indeed, the trajectory of his entire career can be set against that of Bayard Taylor, a younger contemporary whose sketches of farflung lands sold tens of thousands of copies. An adroit self-promoter not adverse to posing (and lecturing) in Ottoman turban and silks, Taylor mixed jaunty first-person description and a skin deep democratic cosmopolitanism. In his books, smiling peasants are omnipresent, rude thatched huts outnumber cathedrals, and lurking behind every vine-choked ruin seems to be a monk eager to tell its tale.

Clearly, with their upbeat xenophobia and their glib Christian bias, such productions could not be Melville's cup of tea. But with his publishers unenthusiastic about *The Confidence Man* and his volume of short stories, Melville naturally looked for alternatives. Travel writ-

ing and lecturing was an expedient much favored by his family. ("Such work," one relative opined, "would not make a requisition on his imagination.") As the leading exponent of this genre, Bayard Taylor, "the pedestrian traveller," would be much on Melville's mind. And he was. Less than two weeks before sailing, Evert Duyckinck recorded in his diary that Melville "Said of Bayard Taylor that as some augur predicted the misfortunes of Charles I from the infelicity of his countenance so Taylor's prosperity 'borne up by the Gods' was written in his face." Duyckinck neglected to transcribe any self-evaluation of Melville's prospects.

FROM JERUSALEM TO EAST 26TH

The incipient travel book argues against itself. "*Constantinople Tuesday, Dec 16. Wandered about in vicinity of Hippodrome till nearly dusk; lost myself, & finally came out at a gate on the Sea of Marmora.*" [p. 66] "*Walked out to the North of the city, but my eyes so affected by the long days ride in the glare of the light of arid hills, had to come back to the hotel.*" [p. 77] Bad eyes, forgetful porters, infestations of bed bugs. Even determination can not keep the path straight: "*April 15 At 2 AM started in diligence for crossing the San Gothard. Bow window. Silence, mystery. Steady roll of wheel. Dawn, zig-zags. Gorge, precipice,*

Snow. At Airolo breakfasted. Mr Abbot accosted me. Storming violently. Hand sleds. Parties waiting at Airolo for three days. Started. Long train. Zig-zag. Houses of refuge. Discussion of the gods &c. Verge & brink of paths." [p. 124]

Everywhere approaches seem precipitous, crooked, not the neat narrative thrusts of Bayard Taylor. "Pyramids from distance purple like mountains. Seem high & pointed, but flatten & depress as you approach. Vapors below summits. Kites sweeping & soaring around, hovering right over apex. At angles, like broken cliff. Table-rock overhanging, adhering solely by mortar. Sidelong look from midway up. Pyramids on a great ridge of sand. You leave the angle, and ascend hillock of sand & ashes & broken mortar & pottery to a point & then go along a ledge to a path &c. Zig-zag routes. As many routes as to cross the Alps-" [p. 75]

At times, Melville could be a commonplace tourist. He bought cheap reproductions of artwork, doted on flower-girls and bickered with waiters. Near Mount Olympus, he carried away with him pieces of glass from a ceiling mosaic. At times, he could even be gullible. In Venice, he noted and apparently accepted, his guide's identification of the abodes of Othello and Shylock.

Most of the time he regretted that his cynicism robbed him of such

attributions. "Patmos is pretty high, & peculiarly barren looking. No inhabitants," he wrote. "Was here again afflicted with the great curse of modern travel- skepticism. Could no more realize that St. John had ever had revelations here, than when off Juan Fernandez, could believe in Robinson Crusoe according to De Foe." His next comment is telling: "When my eye rested on arid height spirit partook of the barrenness- Heartily wish Niebuhr & Strauss to the dogs.- The deuce take their penetration & acumen. They have robbed us of the bloom." [p. 97] What appears to be a digressive rant against German Biblical Higher Criticism delineates a principle underlying Melville's whole commentary; a struggle against the merely literal.

The cry for such particular resonance seems uniquely untailored for mass consumption. At moments, Melville anticipates Innocents Abroad with his ironic deftness: "Talk of the guides: 'Here is the stone Christ leaned against, & here is the English Hotel.' Yonder is the arch where Christ was shown to the people; & just by that open window is sold the best coffee in Jerusalem &c &c &c." [p. 89] Or again: "There is some prophecy about the highways being prepared for the coming of the Jews, and when the 'Deputation from the Scotch Church' were in Judea, they suggested to Sir Moses Montfio-

the expediency of employing the poorer sort of Jews in this work—at the same time facilitating prophecy and clearing the stones out of the way." [p. 90]

Of course, in the Holy Land, the stones will out. "Judea is one accumulation of stones- Stony mountains & stony plains; stony torrents & stony roads; stony walls & stony fields, stony houses & stony tombs; stony eyes & stony hearts. Behind you & behind you are stones. Stones to right & stones to left. In many places laborious attempt has been made, to clear the surface of these stones. You see heaps of stones here & there; and stone walls of immense thickness are thrown together, less for boundaries than to get them out of the way. But in vain; the removal of one stone only serves to reveal three stones still larger, below it." For such nullifying materiality, Melville offers an interlocking explanation: "My theory is that long ago, some whimsical King of the country took it into his head to pave all Judea, and entered into contracts to that effect; but the contractor becoming bankrupt mid-way in his business, the stones were only dumped on the ground & there they lie to this day." [p. 90]

At times, such palpable leveling drove Melville to despair. "No country will more quickly dissipate romantic expectations than

Palestine- particularly Jerusalem. To some the disappointment is heart sickening &c." [p. 91] At other moments, he evinced a grim satisfaction, even offering a theological explanation of geology: "Is the desolation of the land the result of the fatal embrace of the Deity? Hapless are the favorites of heaven." [p. 91] More decisively, he proposes a sort of topographical theory of religion: "Had Jerusalem no peculiar historic associations, still would it, by its extraordinary physical aspect, evoke peculiar emotion in the traveller. As the sight of haunted Haddon Hall suggested to Mrs Radcliffe her curdling romances, so I have little doubt, the diabolical landscapes great part of Judea must have suggested to the Jewish prophets their terrific theology." [p. 89]

Perched on the apex of a pyramid, Melville had "thought it not so high- & sat down on edge, looking below- gradual nervousness & final giddiness & terror." Resembling nature, the mammoth structures somehow defy it: "Color of pyramids same as desert. Some of the stone (but few) friable; most of them hard as ever. No vestige of moss upon them. Not the least... Grass near the pyramids, but will not touch them- as if in fear or awe of them." Describing the wonder, Melville waxed dantesque: "Precipice on precipice, cliff on cliff. Nothing in Nature gives such

an idea of vastness. A balloon to ascend them. View of persons ascending. Arab guides in flowing white mantles. Conducted as by angels up to heaven." Finally, formulating, reformulating his Egyptian description, he postulated an architectural origin for Judaism: "I shudder at idea of ancient Egyptians. It was in these pyramids that was conceived the idea of Jehovah. Terrible mixture of the cunning and awful. Moses learned in all the lore of the Egyptians. The idea of Jehovah born here.-" [p. 75]

Jerusalem he found expressive of "the finality of Christianity, as if this was the last religion of the world, no other possible." [p. 86] In cramped writing he records a suffocating descent into the Church of the Sepulchre: *wedged & half-dazzled, you stare for a moment on the ineloquence of the bedizened*



slab, and glad to come out, wipe your brow glad to escape from the heat & jam of a show-box." [p. 88] In Europe, especially in the villas, the picture was different: "Ruins here take the place of rocks." Nature here is rampant. "Drive to Baie. Along the shore. Road cut through ruins of old villas of Romans. Singular melting together of art in ruins and Nature in vigor. Vine overrunning ruins." [p. 104] Melville lingered in these precincts. At times, his private notes prefigure Pound's late Cantos: "Friday March 20th. At 6 A.M. started for Tivoli. Chilly grey ride across Campagna. Lake Tartarus. Travertine.- Villa of Hadrian— Solemn scene & solemn guide- Extent of ruin.- fine site. Guide philosophizing.- Tivoli on heighth. Temple of the Nymph overhanging- paths- gallery in rock – Claude – Not to Paradise, but Tivoli – shading – middle tint – Villa of Mecenas – Chill ride-home in the evening." [p. 113]

Tellingly, the "middle tint" here derives from the color theories of painter William Page. In his Roman studios, Melville listened to his friend's long Swedenborgian lectures, quirky talks on divine correspondences between aesthetic precepts and nature. Such questions absorbed Melville. (In 1849, George Adler, half-maniac, had kept Melville up late aboard the "Southampton", discussing Swedenborg and fixed-fate.) Not surprisingly, years later, in

Timoleon, when he faulted Greek architecture for lacking the "flushful tint the sense to warm", he evoked Tivoli for contrast.

The poem "The Attic Landscape" ascribes to the Greek "pure outline pale, a linear charm." But Melville's hurried travel notes show a less stoic retrieval. The Acropolis suffers by comparison with a Scottish stronghold: "Strange contrast of rugged rock with polished temple. At Stirling- art & nature correspond. Not so at Acropolis." [p. 99] Only decades later, ruminating on forms in East Twenty-sixth Street, does Melville see topography inhering in design:

GREEK ARCHITECTURE
Not magnitude, not lavishness,
But Form – the Site;
Not innovating wilfulness,
But reverence for the Archetype.

UP AND UP

To Melville, looking up is risky: "If one stands a hundred feet in front of St. Peter's and looks up, a vast and towering pile meets his view. High, high above are the beetling crages and precipices of masonry, and yet higher still above all is the dome. The mind is carried away with its very vastness." It is better to look around: "The mind, instead of being bewildered within itself, is drawn

out by the symmetry and beauty of the forms it beholds."

Better still is to look down. In city after city, Melville climbed stacks of stairs for a panoramic view. Pigeon-shit and a steep ascent did not deter him from the heights of the Genoese Tower: "From the gallery without, all round, another glorious view. (Three great views of Constople.)" [p. 63] In Cairo, he expended three words on the legendary Mosque of Hassan, but reveled in his own bird's-eye dangle: "You stand at base of forecourt of Mosque to get the view, looking sheer down some 200 feet on tops of deserts houses, to immense square full of people, and near the spot where the Memlook saved himself by leaping his horse." [p.74] Nor could he resist Italian vistas: "Ascended. — From below people in turrets of open tracery look like flies caught in cobweb.- The groups of angels on points of pinnacles & everywhere. Not the conception but execution. View from summit. Might write book of travel upon top of Milan Cathedral." [p. 121]

Only some one as symbolical as Melville would elevate a travel strategy into an aesthetic principle. In "The Two Temples", a short story written about 1854, the narrator, having been refused proper admission to a church, darts up a side staircase "in sole

hopes of gaining that one secret window where I might, at distance, take part in the proceedings." He realizes that such viewing requires cultural adjustments: "Though an insider in one respect, yet am I but an outsider in another.... That wire-woven screen had the effect of casting crape upon all I saw. Only by making allowances for the crape, could I gain a right idea of the scene disclosed." [p. 305]

"Went to Old Town. From the water looks like colossal sugar-loaf. white houses. Divided from New Town by open lots. Climbed up. Complete warren of stone houses or rather huts, built without the least plan. Zig-zag. little courts in front of each, sometimes overhead, crossing the tract. Paved with stone, roofs flat & m'cadamized. Up & up, only guide was to mount. [p. 53]

When he returned, the country was in panic, the third depression that would so rhythmically punctuate his family life; 1817, 1837, 1857. His publisher was bankrupt. He vowed not to write again, but would, toying with poems, his travel notes and a sequel to *The Confidence Man*. "— I have trying to scratch my brains for a Lecture," he wrote Curtis. Then, jesting about national chauvinism: "*What is a good, earnest subject? Daily progress of man towards a state of intellectual & moral perfection, as evidenced in history of 5th Avenue & 5 Points.*" [1857 September 15] Once written, his lyceum talks, on "Roman Statuary", "The South Seas", and "Travelling", petered out after three seasons. Reporters compared them to those of Bayard Taylor and found them wanting.

William C. MacKay edited *Edwin Denby's Dance Writings* (Knopf, 1987).

Photograph of Melville (seated) and his brother Thomas, view of Jerusalem, and all quotes from *Herman Melville, Journals*, Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library (Chicago: 1989).



The Harbors and the Institute

Martin Wilhelm

It is less a matter of finding the harbor than of reaching it. In particular, for the many vehicles that are mainly tied-together rusty kegs, torpedo shells, bottles, tree trunks, balloons, and similar trash that is lighter than water. For this reason the Institute bought two old steam tug boats, who patrol around the Statue of Liberty, looking carefully for anything that resembles a boat and trying to prevent it from being washed into the Atlantic. The crews can tell stories—small anecdotes, like circling around to find some stable hooks to tighten the boats to the tugs; more dramatic adventures, when entire constructions rip apart with one little move; ‘clients’ on the hook arguing wildly against the tug crews the danger of becoming dependent on machines and outside help, or, of course, real emergency operations in the ocean fog where solar panels fail to provide enough energy for strange air propellers and New Orleans water shovels.

Finding the Institute and its harbor is less an issue since huge Zeppelins dock at the Refined Capsule above the Flat Planes, swaying around their ports and thus conveniently pointing out the current wind direction. And if by any chance none of the Zeppelins is there, and neither one of the Queen Maries and United States and Michelangelos and Italias docking around the pier (which is really improbable), then the Institute still cannot be missed thanks to the presence of the Refined Capsule itself.

Between six and fifteen stories high, clad in corrugated aluminum of all colors (of course from recycled cans), and sitting on thin stings (with extra slow elevators so as not to deprive people of the precious moments where they are trapped in something without the possibility to be busy), high above the southern most corner of Pier 40, the Capsule displays its most famous and important part to the guests from the Atlantic or other Sausalitos: the hang-out rooms.

Finally, we are a society where hanging-out is now the base of all culture. The hanging-out in concentrated contemplation, creative implementation, and intellectual conversation.

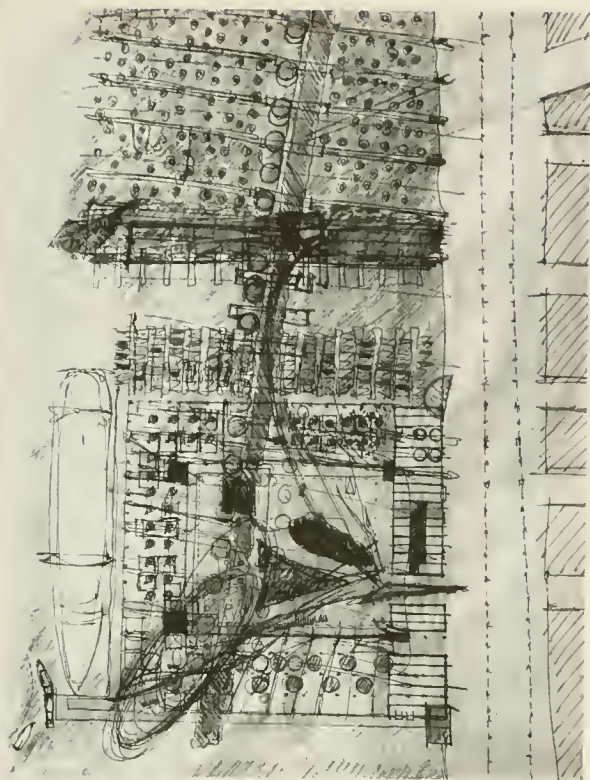
Already from the distance and with the weirdest enlargement tools the arriving boaters try to recognize friends and colleagues up there—and vice versa; and as soon as they have docked at the north face of the pier building (south of Pier 41 and the farm of Lonely Towers, and curiously observed by the kids from the riverbank as if the old superliners were still all leaving New York on late Friday afternoons) most of them rush immediately up there to hug everybody, to tell about their latest adventures and thoughts, to exchange their burning questions, to inform about their new ideas, and to get the harshest criticism or the highest applause—from the

colleagues who are aware of their common human specificities: consciousness and intelligence.

Many of the travellers stay first for awhile in the northern Flat Planes of the pier (which are reserved for the activities of the guests), and start working like maniacs on the first stable ground for weeks or months, start to implement what developed in their heads during this time, and what they think would stimulate an exciting wave of interest among their comrades. It is a particular atmosphere in these Flat Planes. Everywhere there is hammering, sawing, grinding, welding, which can make the halls a veritable hell of noise, dust, smoke and flashes. Constructions go up, made out of trash from the surrounding neighborhoods. People build little shelters: they want to be in this never-ending activity, but need a place to retreat. Everybody tries continuously to define his or her realm and personality by creating, changing, and exploring. They all understand the sufferings and the extremity of creative thought (and architects aren't that separated in this society any more, finally); they are open to weird proposals since they know that the most comfortable and economic thing might be the one that contributes the least to their common enterprise: giving meaning.

Desperate thinkers, doubters, and other freaks with huge rings under their eyes step out of dark isolation, and disappear immediately. But tomorrow they might be the happiest writers, painters, or designers, sweating in front of huge old printing presses on high speed to get the thoughts that came in the dark out in the world, or relaxing through philosophical discussion in the small walled-off oriental gardens in the center of Pier 40, or up on the roof of the planes, in large glass houses, happily back in the real world feeding their chickens and watering their tomatoes.

Also up here the conceptual sense-finders overlook the developments. There are the Brothers Wesnin, thinking how their Palace of Work has to change in these times—what is so different? Or the conceptualists are just experimenting, noting where people settle down, proposing a most informative arrangement when the fight in the dark halls gets out of control, or when the attachments to the Lonely Towers get too ambitious. Or they are implementing new ideas on the energy household of the glasshouses, checking out sun directions, experimenting with exotic plants and seeds: it can be terribly hot and humid up there (so of course the first thing they did was to build a toboggan from up here into the Hudson, and a fork that prevents the bathers from being sucked downstream).



It is a world of transition; transition is not a stay in between, but the constant orientation towards strange attractors.

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*You wake up with a mood that might be so
depressive that
you just want to retreat into the darkest spot, and
you think
you will spend your life there and
you try to get acquainted with the idea, and
suddenly
you change your mind.
You imagine a very different environment that
would suit
your desire to contribute something - and
you move to one of the Lonely Towers.
You sit high above the river on the lonely smokers'
platform, in your perfect solitude - at anytime
you want
you could change
your loneliness into a terrible busy state. Or
you move into one of the glass houses, or
you build a tree house on a pipe sticking out of the
river. Or
you want to leave the place and
you go away.*

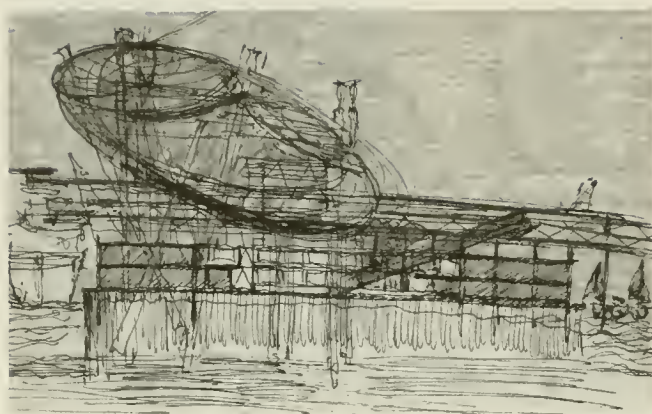
produces for consumers, but culture is now the term for the necessary self-expression of every individual. In practical terms: Everyone can decide to work more and earn more money, but also not to do so, and face the problem of boredom: What is it all about? And everyone starts working again, much more so than before, only with the implementation of the most informative contents in mind: the appreciation of human colleagues is no longer given through money—everybody has it—but only through the degree of how creative you are, what your life and what your personality is, and what footprint you are leaving.

The formal place where this culture is celebrated and exchanged are the Refined Capsules. A strange and interesting crowd gathers day and night in the hanging out facilities up there, dressed in the swankiest handcrafted suits. They gather in front of work stations, around coffee and card tables, chess boards, in libraries, archives and exhibit rooms, bathhouses, performance halls, discussion rounds, massage beds and love rooms. Their common enterprise is to make sense, to concretize the dissolved bits and pieces of truth left over from a time of scientific abstraction. The hang-out facilities all over

the world are the formal places to communicate results and processes, sufferings and pleasures of creativity: the possible and the improbable. Everything which is left to give sense of life to societies that have finally reached the goal of all mechanization and automatization: relief from the burden of work and consequently the immediate confrontation with The Question, the meaning of life. We cannot wait until Big Thought delivers 39. Mysticism as the belief in a higher truth is long lost, as is the belief that continuous progress can at some point provide a technical law of nature for the sense of life. Here in the Refined Capsule the game is newly invented. Game as something that purposefully negates reality but invents and relies on its own rules, generates its own logic, and reaches no goals.

Hanging-out: In terms of an industrial society all the activities of the sense-seekers are un-productive and un-effective. They travel with the slowest possible mode of transportation, for days and weeks 200 yards above ground in Zeppelins, and they do not have to do this to relax from hurry and busy-ness. They are up there to be with a community of colleagues, up there to have a long time to get acquainted with them, learn their stories, and finally dive into nightlong commonly imagined worlds. They watch the night sky, forever when crossing the





Poles, and enjoy the complicated docking maneuvers. And all of a sudden they have this idea, a piece of memory or knowledge combines to create a new sense; and they start writing about it, communicating it. And they might create a new school of thought, one that changes completely the image of the world, and everyone might happily be challenged to re-think things in that way.

Of course I always wanted to be Captain of a Zeppelin, and designer of a Lonely Tower, and author of a screen play, and would not money had been the only form in which this past society was able to express its appreciation, I would of course have done all these things for free.

This essay is based on Martin Wilhelm's 1996 MIT S.M.Arch.S. Thesis, "Technical Images and the Built Environment," a contemplative essay inspired by Vilem Flusser's Into the Universe of Technical Images and a proposal for an Institute of Culture for Pier 40 in Manhattan.

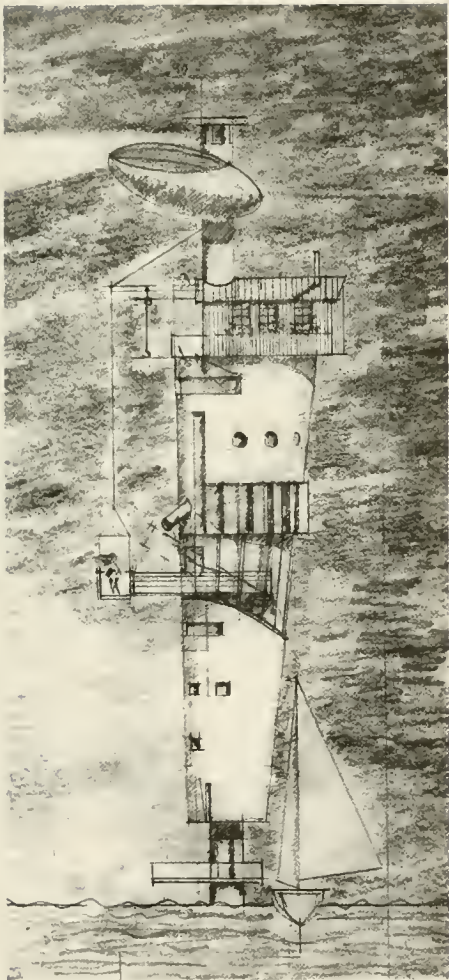
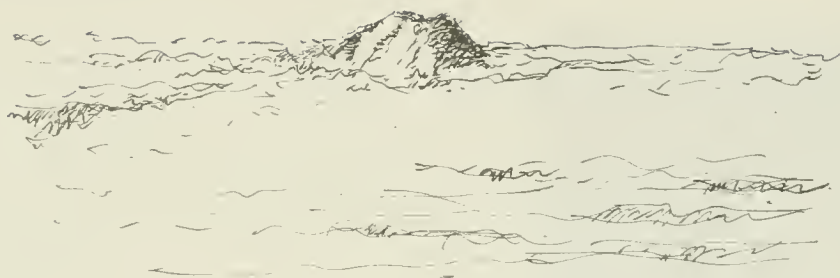


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Ocean liner from an advertisement poster in Denmark.

Zeppelin over New York City from homepage: Zeppelin-Werke
Friedrichshafen, Germany.

all drawings by Martin Wilhelm



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